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HENRY HOLT & Co., Publishers,
25 BOND STREET, NEW YORK.

THE
IDEAL IN ART.

BY
Henri Taine
H. T A I N E.

TRANSLATED BY
John
J. DURAND.



NEW YORK
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY
1874.

Entered according to act of Congress, in the year 1868,
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Southern District of New York.

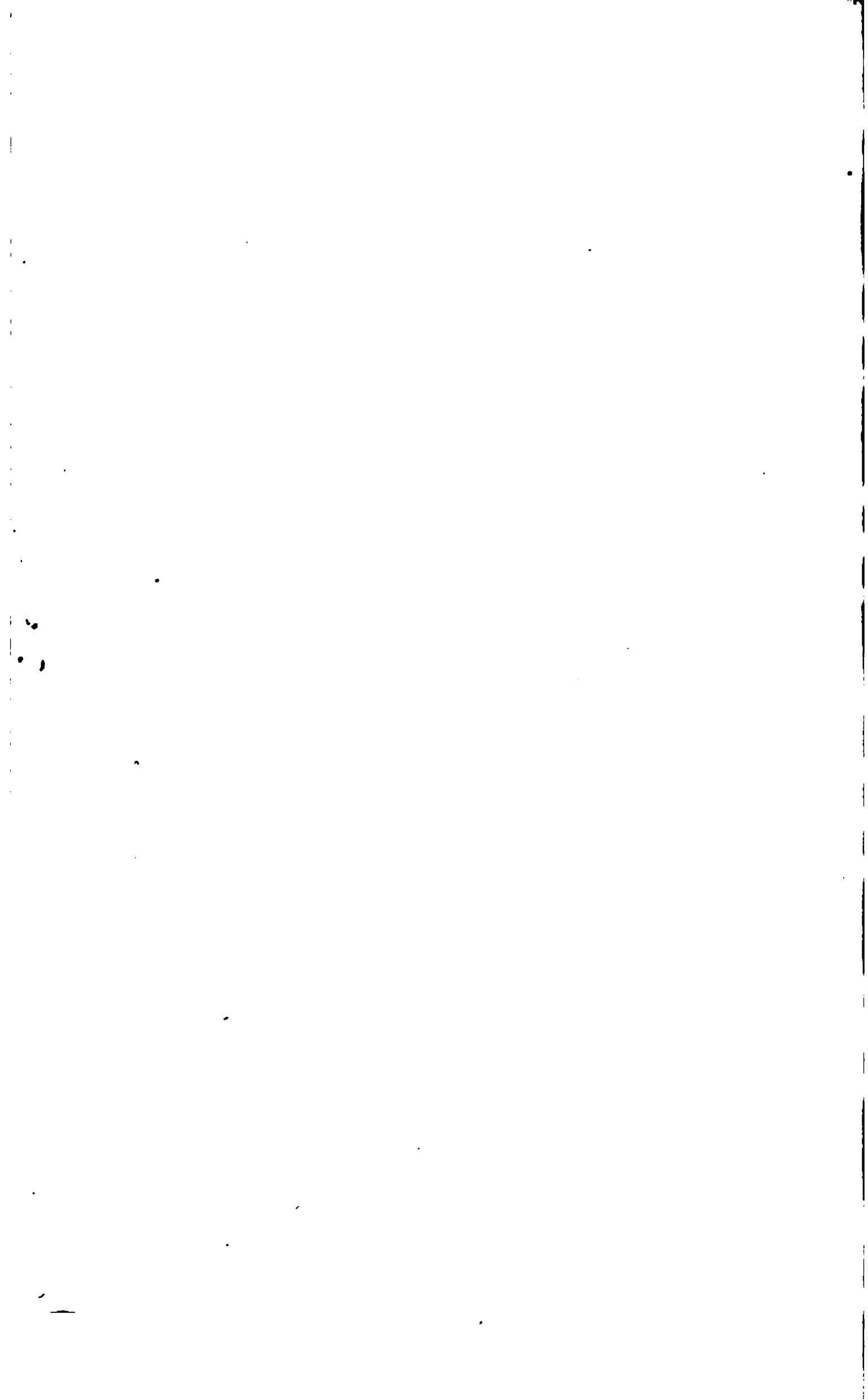
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TO

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NOTICE.

THIS volume, "The Ideal in Art," forms the substance of two lectures, delivered during the past year to the students of the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts*, in Paris, by M. Taine, Professor of the History of Art in that institution. The subject is treated in accordance with the principles laid down by this distinguished writer in "The Philosophy of Art," the theory of which it may be said to complete.

"The Philosophy of Art" is now out of print in America, but the growing interest in Mr. Taine's works will probably soon warrant the issue of another edition.

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ON THE IDEAL IN ART.

GENTLEMEN :

It seems as if the subject to which I am about to claim your attention could only be treated through poesy. In regard to the Ideal it is the heart which speaks ; we then think of the vague and beautiful dream by which is expressed the deepest sentiment ; we scarcely breathe it in the lowest voice, with a kind of subdued enthusiasm ; when we speak of it otherwise it is in verse, in a canticle ; we dwell on it reverentially, with clasped hands, as if it concerned happiness, heaven, or love. As to ourselves, we shall, as usual, study it as naturalists, that is, methodically, analytically, and shall endeavor to realize not an ode but a law.

At first we must understand this word the *Ideal*. The grammatical explanation of it is not difficult. Let me recall the definition of a work of art which we gave at the beginning of this course.* On that occasion we said that the aim of a work of art was to make known some leading and important character more effectually and clearly than objects themselves do. For that purpose the artist forms for himself an idea of that character, and according to his idea he transforms the actual object. This object thus transformed is found to *conform to the idea*, or, in other words, to the *ideal*. Things thus pass from the real to the ideal when the artist reproduces them by modifying them according to his idea, and he modifies them according to his idea when, conceiving and eliminating from them some notable character, he systematically changes the natural relationships of their parts in order to render this character more apparent and powerful.

* See the Philosophy of Art, page 64.

I.

Among the ideas which artists impart to their models are there any which take the lead of others? Can we point out any one character which is superior to all the others? Is there for each object an ideal form outside of which all is deviation or error? Can we discover a principle of subordination by which to assign rank to the diverse productions of art?

At the first glance we are tempted to say, no; the definition which we have given seems to bar the way to this investigation; it leads one to believe that all the works of art are on a level, and that the scope of art is an open question. In short, if the object becomes ideal in that it is alone conformable to the idea, the idea is of little consequence; the choice lies with the artist; he will choose this or that according to his taste; we shall have no claim on him. The same subject may be treated in this form or in another, or in all intermediate forms. Better

still, it seems that here history is in keeping with logic, and that theory is in conformity with the facts. Let us consider different centuries, different nations and different schools. Artists differing in race, in mind and in education, are differently impressed by the same object; each one sees it from his own point of view; each one perceives in it a distinct character; each one forms for himself an original idea of it, and this idea, manifested in the new work, immediately stands forth a new masterpiece in the gallery of ideal forms, like a new divinity in an Olympus heretofore regarded as complete.—Plautus places the poor miser Euclyon on the stage; Molière takes up the same personage also, and places there the rich miser Harpagon. Two centuries later the miser, not stupid and taunted as formerly, but redoubtable and triumphant, becomes old Grandet in the hands of Balzac, and the same miser taken from the provinces and becoming Parisian, cosmopolite and a drawing-room poet, furnishes the same Balzac the usurer Gobseck.—One situation alone, that of a father

maltreated by his ungrateful children, suggested the *Œdipus* of Sophocles, Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Balzac's *Père Goriot*.—Every romance and every drama represents some young man and young woman in love with each other and anxious to be married; under how many different forms have this same couple been presented from Shakespeare to Dickens and from Madame de Lafayette to George Sand. The lovers, the father, the miser, all the great types can therefore be always reproduced; they have been so uninterruptedly and will still continue to be so, and it is truly the appropriate and sole glory, the hereditary necessity of true genius to create such characters outside of the conventional and traditional order of things.

If, after literary productions, we regard the arts of design, the right of selecting at will this or that character appears to be still better founded. A dozen or so of evangelical or mythological subjects or personages have been equal to the wants of high art; the arbitrary will of the artist declares itself here not only by a di-

versity of works, but by complete success. We dare not praise one more than another, we dare not place one perfect work above another, we dare not say that we should follow Rembrandt rather than Veronese, or Veronese rather than Rembrandt. And yet what a contrast! In the "Feast of Emmaus"* the Christ of Rembrandt is a resuscitated, cadaverous, sallow, and dolorous figure, who has experienced the chill of the grave, and whose sad and benignant look fixes itself once more on human misery. Near to this figure are two disciples, old worn-out laborers with bald and blanched heads, seated at the table of a common inn, a little stable-boy looking on with a vacant air, while around the head of the revived Redeemer shines the peculiar radiance of the other world. In the "Christ of the Hundred Florins" the same idea reappears more vividly. This, indeed, is the Christ of the people, the Saviour of the poor,

* See this picture in the Louvre; the engraved sketch is somewhat different.

standing in one of those Flemish caverns, where the Lollards once prayed and wove; ragged mendicants and hospital outcasts extend toward him their suppliant hands: a coarse peasant-woman, kneeling, looks at him with the staring and fixed eyes of deep faith; a paralytic is brought stretched across a barrow — tattered clothes, old greasy mantles faded by exposure, scrofulous and deformed bodies, pale, wan, brutalized faces, a sorrowful mass of ugliness and disease, a sort of human sty which the favored of the age, fat citizens and a corpulent burgo-master, gaze on with insolent indifference, but over which the benignant Christ stretches His healing hands, whilst His supernatural light penetrates the shadows, and radiates even to the dripping walls.—If poverty, sadness, and gloom, flecked with vague lights, have furnished masterpieces; wealth, mirth, and the warm and beaming light of open day furnish kindred masterpieces. Look at the three feasts of Christ by Veronese, at Venice and in the Louvre. The open sky expands above an architecture of balus-

trades, colonnades, and statues ; glittering whiteness, and the surfaces of variegated marbles, frame an assemblage of lords and ladies enjoying a feast, a Venetian public banquet of the sixteenth century ; Christ sits in the centre, and in long rows around Him, nobles in silken pourpoints, princesses in brocade robes eat and laugh, while greyhounds, negroes, dwarfs, and musicians attract the eyes or the ears of the attendant company. Simarres, woven with black and silver, undulate by the side of velvet skirts embroidered with gold ; collars of lace encircle the satiny whiteness of necks ; pearls gleam on blonde tresses ; blooming carnations lead one to divine the force of youthful blood flowing easily and in full veins ; intelligent and vivacious faces are on the verge of a smile, while upon the silvery or rosy lustre of the general tint golden yellows, deep blues, intense scarlet, rayed greens and broken and uniform tones complete, in their elegant and exquisite harmony, the poesy of this aristocratic and voluptuous display.

On the other hand what is there better deter-

mined than the pagan Olympus? Greek statuary and literature have clearly defined all its contours ; it seems that, in its place, every innovation was prohibited, every form fixed, and all invention circumscribed. And yet each painter, in transferring it to his canvas, makes a character predominate there hitherto unrecognized. The "Parnassus" of Raphael offers to the eye lovely young women of a sweetness and grace perfectly human ; an Apollo who, with heavenward eyes, is lost in listening to the sound of his own lyre ; a symmetrical architecture of chaste harmonious forms, modest nudities which the sober and almost dull tone of the fresco renders still more modest. With opposite characters Rubens repeats the same work. Nothing is less antique than his mythology. In his hands Greek divinities have become Flemish bodies with a sanguine and lymphatic pulpiness, and his celestial banquets resemble the masques which, at the same epoch, Ben Jonson arranged for the court of James I. : bold nudities doubly enhanced by the splendor of falling draperies ;

fat, white Venuses holding captive their lovers with a courtesan's abandoned air; arch and sly Ceres in smiles; plump and palpitating backs of writhing sirens; mellow and extended inflexions of the pliant, living muscle; the fury of transport, the impetuosity of desire, the sumptuous display of an unbridled and conquering sensuality, which the temperament feeds, which is unchecked by conscience, which becomes poetic in remaining animal, and, through an unusual concurrence, merges in its pleasures all the immunities of nature and all the pomp of civilization.

The culminating point is here again reached; "lusty good humor" surrounds and pervades all; "the wings of this Flemish Titan were so strong that he rose upward to the sun, although quintals of Dutch cheese hung to his legs."*—If, finally, instead of comparing two artists of a different race, you restrict yourselves to the same nation, revert to the Italian works that I

* Heine's *Reisebilder*, vol. i., p. 154.

have described to you, namely, the Crucifixions, the Nativities, the Annunciations, the Madonnas and Infants, the Jupiters, the Apollos, the Venuses and the Dianas ; and, in order to render your impressions clear, to the same scene treated by three masters, Leonardo da Vinci, Michael Angelo, and Correggio. I refer to their “Ledas,” the three engravings of which you are, at least, familiar with. The “Leda” of Da Vinci is erect, modest, the eyes downcast, and the sinuous, serpentine lines of her beautiful body undulate with a regal and subtle elegance ; with a conjugal turn, the swan, almost human, envelopes her with his wing, and the little pair nestling alongside of her have the oblique eye of that bird ; nowhere is the mystery of ancient days, the profound relation between man and animal, the vague pagan and philosophic sentiment of the unity and universality of life expressed with more accurate research, and disclosing the divinations of a more penetrating and comprehensive genius.—The “Leda” of Michael Angelo, on the contrary, is a queen of a colossal and mili-

tant race, a sister of those sublime virgins who slumber, exhausted, in the chapel of the Medici, or awake painfully to commence again the struggle of life; her large, elongated form has the same muscles and the same structure; her cheeks are sunken; there is not the faintest trace in her of joy or abandonment; even in a moment like this she is grave, almost sombre. The tragic soul of Michael Angelo puts motion into those athletic limbs, throws back that heroic torso, and renders rigid that fixed look beneath that frowning brow.—The age changes, and virile sentiments give place to feminine sentiments. With Correggio the scene becomes a bath of young girls under the soft green shade of the trees, and amidst the gentle flow of a rippling and murmuring stream. Every thing is both seductive and attractive; complete voluptuousness, the happy dream, the sweet grace, never expanded or moved the soul by a more penetrating and effective language. The beauty of form and of head is not noble, but lovely and endearing. Full and smiling, with the lustre of satin, with

the brilliancy of flowers lit up by the sun, the bloom of the most blooming youth enhances the delicate whiteness of their flesh impregnated with light. One, blonde, complacent, with the equivocal torso and hair of a youth, chases away the swan; another, arch and pretty, holds the chemise into which her companion enters, while the aërial tissue which lightly covers her scarcely veils the full contours of her lovely form; others, frolicsome, with low brows, large lips, and prominent chins, play in the water with an abandonment at once riotous and enticing. Still more abandoned, and content to be so, Leda smiles and yields; and thus the intoxicating exquisite sensation which is derived from the whole scene overflows in her ecstasy and transport.

Which is to be preferred? And which is the superior character, the charming grace of excessive happiness, the tragic grandeur of haughty energy, or the depth of intelligent and refined sympathy? All correspond to some essential portion of human nature, or to some essential moment of human development. Joy and sad-

ness, sound reason and mystic revery, active energy or refined sensibility, lofty aspirations of the restless intellect and the broad expansion of animal delight, * [all the important parts in the province of life have their value.] Centuries and entire nations have been engaged in bringing them to light; what history has manifested art takes up, and, as the various natural creatures, whatever may be their structure and their instincts, find their place in the world and an explanation in science, so the various works of the human imagination, whatever may be the principle which animates them, and the direction which they manifest, find their justification in discriminating sympathy and their place in art.

II.

And yet in the imaginary world as in the real world there are different degrees because there are different values. The public and connoisseurs determine some and estimate others. We have done nothing but this for three years in traversing five centuries of Italian painting. We have always, and at every step, pronounced judgment. Without knowing it we held a measuring instrument in our hands. Other men do as we do, and in criticism, as elsewhere, there are ascertained truths. Every man now recognizes that certain poets like Dante and Shakespeare, certain composers like Mozart and Beethoven occupy the highest places in their art. Among all the writers of our century this place is given to Goethe. Among the Flemings, every one awards it to Rubens; among the Dutch to Rembrandt; among the Germans to Albert Durer; among the Venetians to Titian. Three artists of the Italian renaissance, Leonardo da

Vinci, Michael Angelo and Raphael, rise, by unanimous consent, above all the rest.—Moreover, these definitive judgments which posterity pronounces are confirmed in their justice by the way in which they are rendered. In the first place the contemporaries of the artist unite to judge him, and this judgment, in which so many differing minds, temperaments, and educations have concurred, is important, because the inadequacy of each individual taste has been supplemented by the diversities of others' tastes; prejudices, coming in conflict with each other are balanced, and this continuous and mutual compensation gradually brings the final result nearer to the truth. This done, another century continues the work in a new vein, and then after this, another; each revises the litigated point, each doing it from his own point of view; all are so many profound rectifications and powerful combinations. When the work, after thus having passed from court to court issues from them, determined in the same manner, and the judges, stationed along the line of centuries

agree in the same verdict, the sentence, probably, is just; for, if the work were not superior, it would not have drawn together so many different sympathies in such a decision. If the limitation of mind peculiar to epochs and to nations leads them sometimes, like individuals, to judge and comprehend badly, here, as in the case of individuals, the aberrations being rectified and the deviations being annulled by each other, they tend gradually to that state of fixity and of rectitude, in which opinion is found so well and legitimately established, that we may adhere to it with confidence and with reason. In addition, in fine, to this conformity of instinctive tastes the modern processes of criticism come to add the authority of science to that of common sense. A critic is now aware that his personal taste has no value, that he must set aside his temperament, inclinations, party, and interests; that, above all, his talent lies in sympathy, that his first essay in history should consist in putting himself in the place of the men whom he is desirous of judging, to enter into

their instincts and habits, to espouse their sentiments, to re-think their thoughts, to reproduce within himself their inward condition, to represent to himself minutely and substantially their surroundings, to follow in imagination the circumstances and the impressions which, added to their innate tendency, have determined their actions and guided their lives. Such a course, in placing us at an artistic point of view, permits us better to comprehend them; and as it is composed of analysis, it is, like every scientific operation, capable of verification and perfectibility. By following this method we have been able to approve and disapprove of this or that artist, to condemn one and praise another part of the same work, to determine the nature of values, to point out progress or decline, to recognize periods of bloom and decay, not arbitrarily, but according to a common criterion. (It is this hidden criterion that I am going to try to disclose, to define, and to demonstrate to you.

III.

Let us consider, to this end, the various parts of the definition which we have given. To give full prominence to a leading character is the object of a work of art. It is owing to this that the closer a work of art approaches this point the more perfect it becomes; in other words the more exactly and completely these conditions are complied with the more elevated it becomes on the scale. Two of these conditions are necessary; it is necessary that the character should be the most notable possible and the most dominant possible. Let us study closely these two artistic obligations. In order to abridge our labor I will examine only the arts of imitation, sculpture, dramatic music, painting and literature, and principally the two last. That will suffice; for you know the link which binds together the arts that imitate and the arts that do not imitate.* Both seek to render dominant some notable character. Both succeed by employing an

* See the Philosophy of Art, chap. v. p. 65.

ensemble of connected parts, the relationships of which they combine or modify. The only difference is that the arts of imitation, painting, sculpture, and poesy, reproduce organic and moral connections and form works corresponding to real objects, whilst the other arts, music properly so called and architecture, combine mathematical relationships so as to create works that do not correspond to real objects. But a symphony, a temple thus constituted are living beings like a written poem or a painted figure; for they are also organized beings, all the parts of which are mutually dependent and governed by a guiding principle; they also possess a physiognomy, they also manifest an intention, they also speak through expression, they also terminate in an effect. Under all these headings they are ideal creations of the same order as the others, subjected to the same laws of formation as to the same rules of criticism; they are only a distinct group in the entire class, and, with a restriction known by anticipation, the truths which are alongside of them are applied to them.

§ 1.

**THE DEGREE OF IMPORTANCE OF THE
CHARACTER.**

I.

What, then, is a notable character, and how at first, can we know, two characters being given, if one is more important than the other? We find ourselves carried back by this question into the domain of science; for the question here is of beings in themselves, and it rightly belongs to the sciences to take account of the characters composing this class of beings. We are obliged to make an excursion into natural history; I will not apologize to you for so doing; if the matter seems, at first, to be dry and abstract let us overlook it. The relationship existing between art and science is as honorable for the one as for the other; it is the glory of the latter to give to beauty its principal adjuncts; it is the glory of the former to base its noblest structures on the truth.

It is about a hundred years since the natural sciences discovered the law of valuation which we are about to borrow from them; namely, the

principle of the subordination of characters; all the classifications of botany and of zoölogy have been constructed according to it, and its importance has been demonstrated by discoveries as unexpected as profound. In a plant, and in an animal, certain characters have been recognized as more important than others; these are the *least variable* characters. In this respect they possess a force greater than that of others, for they better bear up against the attack in every circumstance, internal or external, which might undo or vary them. (For example, in a plant, shape and size are less important than structure; for, inwardly, certain accessory characters, and, outwardly, certain accessory conditions, cause shape and size to vary without affecting the structure. The pea that clings to the earth, and the acacia that shoots up into the air, are closely-related leguminosæ; a stem of wheat three feet high, and a bamboo of thirty feet, are kindred graminæ; the same fern, so diminutive in our climate, becomes a large tree in the tropics.—In like manner, also, in one of

the vertebrata, the number, the arrangement, and the functions of members, are less important than the possession of mammæ. It may be aquatic, terrestrial, aërial, and undergo all the changes which a change of locality comports, without, on that account, the structure which renders it capable of suckling being altered or destroyed. The bat and the whale are mammalia, like the dog, the horse, and man. The formative forces which have drawn out the members of the bat, and changed his hands into wings; which have joined, shortened, and almost effaced the posterior members of the whale, have not had any effect, in one case or in the other, on the organ which gives to the young its food and the flying mammal like the swimming mammal remain brothers of the mammal that walks.—Thus is it with the whole scale of beings, and with the whole scale of characters. Such an organic arrangement is a more onerous weight, because forces capable of moving a lesser one fail in doing so.

Consequently, when one of these masses is

disturbed, it carries along with it corresponding masses. In other words, one character brings and bears away with it characters all the more invariable and the more important, because it is more invariable and more important itself. For example, the presence of the wing, being a very subordinate character, carries with it but very slight modifications, and remains without effect on the general structure. Animals of a different class may possess wings ; alongside of birds are winged mammalia like bats, winged lizards like the ancient ptéro-dactyl and flying fishes like the exocetus. Indeed, the arrangement which renders an animal able to fly is of so little consequence, that it is met with even in different orders ; not only do many of the vertebrata have wings, but, again, many of the articulatæ ; and, on the other hand, this power is so little important that it is in turn present or absent in the same class ; five families of insects fly, and one, that of the aptera does not fly.—On the contrary, the presence of mammæ, being a very important character, bears with it important

[modifications and in its principal traits determines the structure of the animal. All the mammifers belong to the same division ; as soon as a mammifer appears, it is necessarily one of the vertebrata. Moreover, the presence of mammæ is always accompanied by a double circulation, viviparous birth, and a membranous lining of the lungs which the rest of the vertebrata, birds, reptiles, fishes, and amphibious organisms, exclude. In general read the name of a class, of a family, of any order of natural beings ; the name which expresses the essential character shows you the organic feature selected as its sign. Then read the two or three lines following it : you will therein find enumerated a series of characters which are for the former inseparable accompaniments, and whose importance and number measure the grandeur of the masses which come and go along with it.

If now we attempt to get at the reason which gives superior importance and invariability to certain characters it will generally be found in what follows : in a living being there are two

parts, the elements and their combination ; the combination is ulterior while the elements are primitive ; we may derange the combination without affecting the elements ; we cannot alter the elements without deranging the combination. We must accordingly distinguish two sorts of characters, some profound, innate, original, fundamental, which are those of the elements or materials ; the others superficial, external, derived and superposed, those of combination or arrangement. Such is the principle of the most fruitful theory of the natural sciences, that of analogy, by which Geoffroy St. Hilaire has explained the structure of animals and Goethe the structure of plants. In the skeleton of an animal it is necessary to point out two series of characters, the one which comprises the anatomical elements and their connexions, the other comprehending their elongations, their contractions, their jointures and their adaptation to this or that function. The former are primitive and the latter are derived ; the same articulations with the same relation-

ships appear in the arm of man, in the wing of the bat, in the vertebral column of the horse, in the leg of the cat and in the fin of a whale; elsewhere, as in the slow-worm and the boa-constrictor, parts become useless, subsist in a rudimentary state, and these being conserved, as well as the unity of the plan being maintained, bear witness to the elementary forces which all subsequent transformations have been unable to abolish.—In the same manner it has been shown that, primitively and fundamentally, all the parts of a flower are leaves; and this distinction of two natures, the one essential, the other accessory, has accounted for abortions, monstrosities, analogies, as numerous as obscure, by opposing the inner web of the living tissue to the folds, seams and amplifications which go to hide and diversify it.—A general rule proceeds from these partial manifestations, seeing that in order to unravel the most important character, we must consider being in its origin or in its constituents; to observe it in its simplest form as is the case in embryogeny, or to mark distinctive characters

which are common to its elements, as is done in anatomy and general physiology. In short it is according to the characters furnished by the embryo, or according to the mode of development common to all the parts, that the immense body of plants is now classified; these two characters are of such great importance that they mutually involve each other, and contribute, both of them, to establish the same classification. According as the embryo is, or is not provided with small primitive leaves; according as it possesses one or two of these leaves it takes its place in one of the three divisions of the vegetable kingdom. If it has two of these leaves its stem is formed of concentric layers, and harder in the centre than at the circumference; its root is supplied by the primary axis, and its floral verticils are composed, almost always, of two or five pieces, or of their multiples. If it has but one of these leaves its stem is formed of scattered groups and is found softer in the centre than at the circumference; its root is supplied by the secondary axis, and its floral verticils are composed almost

always of three pieces or of their multiples. Correspondences as general and as stable are met with in the animal kingdom ; and the conclusion which, at the end of their labor, the natural sciences bequeath to the moral sciences is that characters are more or less important according as they are forces more or less great ; that the measure of their force is found in the degree of their resistance to the attack ; that, therefore, their greater or less invariability gives them a higher or lower hierarchical position ; and that, in short, their invariability is all the greater when they constitute in being a more profound substratum, and belong not to its combination but to its elements.

II.

Let us apply this principle to man ; at first to the moral man and to the arts which take him for object ; that is to say to dramatic music, to the romance, to the drama, to the epic and to literature in general. What constitutes the order of the importance of characters, and how verify their different degrees of variability? History supplies us with very sure and very simple means ; for events, in working upon man, modify in various proportions the various layers of ideas and of sentiments which we remark in him. Time scores us and furrows us as a pickaxe the soil, and thus exposes our moral geology ; under its action our superposed surfaces disappear in turn, some faster and others more slowly. The earliest strokes of the pick easily scratch off a loose soil, a sort of soft alluvion and wholly external ; later come harder packed gravel and thicker beds of sand which, in order to disappear, require more prolonged labor. Lower down stretch layers of

calcareous stone, marbles and shale all immovable and compact ; entire ages of continuous labor, profound excavations and repeated blastings are necessary in order to effect results. Lower down still is buried at immeasurable distances, the primitive granite, the support of the rest, and, powerful as the attack of centuries may be, time fails entirely to remove it.

On the surface of man are grafted manners, ideas, a kind of character which lasts three or four years, such as that of fashion and the passing hour. A traveller who has been to America or to China finds that Paris is not the same Paris he left behind him. He feels like a provincialist and an exile ; the pleasures of life wear a changed aspect ; the vocabulary of the clubs and of the minor theatres is different ; the exquisite who rules in matters of fashion has no longer the same sort of elegance ; he displays other vests and other cravats ; his scandals and his follies are manifested in another way ; his name itself is even a novelty, he becomes in turn the *petit-maitre*, the fop, the coxcomb, the dandy,

the lion, the *gandin*, the *cocodès* and *le petit crevé*.

A few years suffice to sweep away and replace the name and the thing; the variations of the toilette measure the variations of this sort of creature; among all the varieties of man it is the most superficial and empty. Below this we find a substratum of character a little more solid; it lasts twenty, thirty, and forty years, about the half of a historic period. We have just seen the end of one, that which had its centre in the society of 1830. You will find its representative personage in the "Antony" of Alexander Dumas, in the young heroes of the drama of Victor Hugo, in the souvenirs and narratives of your uncles and of your fathers. It refers to the man of strong passions and sombre reveries, to the enthusiast and the poet, to the politician and the revolutionist, to the humanitarian and the innovator, the would-be consumptive, the seeming fatalist, wearing the tragic vests and the pompous hair to be seen in the engravings of Déveria; he now seems to us at once bombastic and artless, but we cannot refuse to recognize him as being

ardent and magnanimous. In short he is the plebeian of a new class, richly endowed with faculties and with desires, who, having for the first time attained to the heights of society boisterously displays the trouble of his mind and of his heart. His sentiments and his ideas are those of an entire generation ; hence it is that an entire generation has to elapse before we can see them disappear. This is the second substratum, and the time taken by history to dispose of it shows us the degree of its importance in showing us the degree of its depth.

We have now reached the substratum of the third order, which is very vast and very deep. The characters composing it last a whole historic period, like the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Classic period. The same uniformity of mind prevailed then during one or many centuries and opposed itself to the secret assaults, to the violent destruction, to all the sapping and undermining which, during the whole period, constantly attacked it. Our grandfathers witnessed the disappearance of one of these periods,

that of the Classic period which finished, as to politics, with the revolution of 1789; and, as to literature, with Delille and M. de Fontanes, and, as to religion, with the appearance of Joseph de Maistre and the fall of Gallicanism. It had commenced in politics with Richelieu, in literature with Malherbe, in religion with that peaceful and spontaneous reform which, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, renewed French Catholicism. It has lasted nearly two centuries, and it may be recognized by unmistakable signs. To the costume of the cavalier and bully, which the exquisites of the Renaissance wore, succeeds the genuine dress-coat such as is necessary for drawing-rooms and the court; the peruke, cuffs, the Rhinegrave, the easy-setting garment adapted to the varied and measured movements of the man of the world; embroidered and gilded silks decked with laces, the pleasing and majestic attire made for seigneurs who desire to shine and yet preserve their rank. Through continued and accessory changes this costume lasts up to the moment when panta-

loons, the republican boot and the grave, useful black coat came to replace shoe-buckles, tight silk-hose, lace frills, figured waistcoats and the rose-colored, or light-blue, or apple-green coat of the old court. Throughout this interval one character prevails which Europe still gives us credit for, that of the polished gallant Frenchman, expert in the art of treating others courteously, brilliant in conversation, fashioned, more or less remotely, according to the courtier of Versailles, loyal to the noble style and to all the monarchical proprieties of language and of manners. A group of doctrines and of sentiments are joined to these, or are derived from them; religion, the state, philosophy, love, the family then receive the imprint of the prevailing character; and this sum of moral aptitudes constitutes one of the grand types which the human memory will always cherish, because it recognizes in it one of the leading forms of human development.

However firm and stable these types may be they come to an end. We see, for eighty years past, the Frenchman, engrossed by the demo-

cratic regime, lose much of his politeness, the greater part of his gallantry, intensifying, diversifying and varying his tone of character, and comprehending in a novel way all the great interests of society and of the human mind. A people in the course of its long life, goes through many such reiterations; and yet it remains intact, not only by the continuity of the generations composing it, but also by the persistence of the character underlying it. Herein consists the primitive substratum; beneath the strong foundation which the historic periods bear away, deepens and extends itself a foundation much stronger, which the historic periods do not bear away. If you consider in turn the leading races from their first appearance up to the present time you will always find in them a class of instincts and of aptitudes over which revolutions, decadences, civilization have passed without having affected them. These aptitudes and these instincts are in the blood and are transmitted with it; in order to change them a change of blood is necessary, that is to say an invasion,

a permanent conquest, and, consequently, comminglings of race, or, at least, a change of the physical *milieu*, that is to say an emigration and the slow effect of a new climate, in short a transformation of temperament and of the physical structure. When, in the same country the blood remains nearly unmixed the same character of spirit and of mind which shows itself in the former grandfathers is again found in the latest grandchildren. The Achaian of Homer, the loquacious and babbling hero who on the battlefield relates genealogies and histories to his adversary before giving him blows with his lance, is substantially the same as the Athenian of Euripides, philosopher, sophist, and wrangler who utters in the open theatre the maxims of the schools and the pleadings of the agora; we see him later in the diletant, complacent, parasitic *Groeculus* of the Roman sovereignty; in the bibliophilist critic of Alexandria; in the disputatious theologian of the Lower Empire; the John Cantacuzenes and the wranglers who, become infatuated over the uncreated light of Mount

Athos, are the true sons of Nestor and of Ulysses; through ~~twenty-five centuries~~ of civilization and of decadence ~~prevails the same power~~ of language, of analysis, of dialectics and of subtilty.—In like manner the Anglo-Saxon such as we behold him through the manners, the civil laws and the ancient poesy of the barbaric epoch, a sort of ferocious, carnivorous and militant brute, but heroic and endowed with noble moral and poetic instincts, reappears, after five hundred years of Norman conquest and of French importations, in the impassioned and imaginative drama of the Renaissance, in the brutality and licentiousness of the Restoration, in the sombre and austere puritanism of the Revolution, in the foundation of political liberty and the triumph of moral culture, in the energy, the pride, the sadness, the elevation of character and the maxims which, in England, sustain, at the present day, the laborer and the citizen.—Let us look at the Spaniard described by Strabo and the latin historians, solitary, haughty, indomitable, dressed in black; and let us behold him later, in the

middle ages, the same in his leading traits although the Visigoths cast a little new blood into his veins, as obstinate, as untractable and as arrogant, driven to the sea by the Moors and regaining step by step all his patrimony by a crusade of eight centuries, still exalted and hardened by the length and the monotony of the struggle, fanatical and narrow, limited to the ways of the inquisitor and the knight just as in the times of the Cid, under Philip II., under Charles II., in the war of 1700, and in the war of 1808, and in the chaos of despotisms and of insurrections which he maintains at the present day.—Let us consider in fine, the Gauls, our ancestors: the Romans said of them that they prided themselves on two things, namely, to fight bravely and to talk adroitly.* These, indeed, are the great natural gifts which show themselves the most in our labors and in our history: on the one hand, the military spirit, brilliant and sometimes foolish courage; on the other, literary talent, the

* *Duas res industriosissimè persequitur gens Gallorum, rem militarem et argutè loqui.*

charm of conversation and delicacy of style. Immediately on the formation of our language in the twelfth century the Frenchman, gay, artful, fond of amusing himself and others, who talks easily and too much, who knows how to address women, who loves to shine, who exposes himself boastingly and also through impulse, sensitive to the idea of honor, less sensitive to the idea of duty, appears in literature and in society. The songs of the troubadours and the fables, the Romance of the Rose, Charles of Orleans, Joinville and Froissart, represent him to you such as you are to see him later in Villon, Brantome and Rabelais; such as he will be again in the time of his greatest glory, in the time of La Fontaine, Molière, and Voltaire, in the charming drawing-rooms of the eighteenth century and even down to the century of Berenger.

Thus is it with every people; it suffices to compare one epoch of its history with the contemporary epoch of another history in order to find again under secondary changes the national character always intact and persistent.

This is the primitive foundation ; it lasts the whole life of a people, and serves as a support to the successive strata which successive periods happen to deposit on the surface.—If you were to go further down you would find other foundations still deeper ; there are the obscure and gigantic strata which linguistic science is beginning to lay bare. Underlying the characters of communities are the characters of races. Certain general traits denote old relationships between nations of a different genius ; the Latins, the Greeks, the Germans, the Slavonians, the Celts, the Persians, the Hindoos are offshoots of the same ancient trunk ; neither migrations, crossings, nor transformations of temperament have been able to graft on them certain philosophical and social aptitudes, certain general ways of conceiving morality, of comprehending nature, of expressing thought. On the other hand these fundamental traits which are common to all of them are not to be found in a different race such as the Semites or the Chinese ; these possess others and of the same

order. The different races are to each other in moral, as a vertebrata, an articulata, a mollusk are to each other in physical relationship; they are beings organized according to distinct plans and belonging to distinct divisions.—Finally, at the lowest stage, are found the characters peculiar to every superior race capable of spontaneous civilization, that is to say endowed with that aptitude for general ideas which is the appanage of man and which leads him to found societies, religions, philosophies and arts; similar dispositions subsist through all the differences of race, and the physiological diversities which master the rest do not succeed in affecting them.

Such is the order in which are superposed the layers of sentiments, of ideas, of aptitudes and of instincts composing the human soul. You see how in descending from the higher to the lower we find them always more complex, and how their importance is measured by their stability. The rule that we have borrowed from the natural sciences here finds its full application and

verifies itself in all its consequences. For the characters the most stable are in civil as in natural history the most elementary, the most profound and the most general. In the psychological, as well as in the organic individual, it is necessary to distinguish the primitive as well as the later characters, the elements which are primordial and their arrangement which is derived. Now a character is elementary when it is common to all the movements of the intellect: such is the aptitude to think by means of vivid imagery, or by long chains of ideas exactly concatenated; it is not peculiar to certain particular movements of the intellect; it establishes its empire over all the provinces of human thought, and exercises its action over all the productions of the human mind; as soon as man reasons, imagines, and speaks it is present and paramount; it impels him on in a certain direction, it closes to him certain issues. Thus is it with others. Thus the more elementary a character is the more extended is its ascendancy. But the more its ascendancy is extended the more stable

it is. There are situations already very general and, consequently, dispositions not less general, which determine historic periods and their leading representatives—the wayward and insatiate plebeian of our century, the aristocratic courtier and drawing-room favorite of the classic era, the lonely and independent baron of the middle ages. There are characters much more profound and wholly belonging to the physical temperament which constitute national genius: in Spain the need of sharp and keen sensations and the terrible explosion of an exalted and concentrated imagination; in France the need of clear and affiliated ideas and the easy movement of the facile reason. They are the most elementary dispositions; a language with or without a grammar, a phrase capable or incapable of a period, a thought at one time reduced to a dry algebraic notation, at another, flexible, poetic, and subtle, at another, impassioned, keen, and violently explosive which constitute the races like those of the Chinese, the Aryans and the Semites. Here, as in natural history, it is necessary to

note the embryo of the nascent mind in order to discover in it the distinctive traits of the complete and developed mind; the characters of the primitive age are the most significant of all; as according to the presence, the absence, or the number of the cotyledons we divine the order to which the plant and the principal traits of its type belong, so, according to the structure of language and the nature of myths we can form an idea of the future form of religion, of philosophy, of society and of art.—You perceive that in the human kingdom as in the animal or vegetable kingdom the principle of the subordination of characters establishes the same hierarchy: the superior rank and the first importance belong to the most stable characters; and if these are more stable it is that, being more elementary, they are present on a much larger surface and are swept away only by a greater revolution.

III.

To this scale of moral values corresponds, step by step, the scale of literary values. All things in other respects being equal, according as the character set forth in a book is more or less important, that is to say more or less elementary and stable, this book becomes more or less beautiful, and you will see the layers of the moral strata communicate to the literary works which express them, their proper degree of power and duration.

There is, at first, a literature of fashion which expresses the character in the fashion; it lasts, like that character, three or four years and sometimes less; it commonly blossoms and decays with the leaves of the year: it consists of the romance, the farce, the pamphlet, the novelty in vogue. Read, if you have the courage to do so, a vaudeville or a humorous piece of the year 1835,—you will let it drop out of your hand. Attempts are often made to reproduce it on the

stage ; twenty years ago it was the rage ; to-day the audience yawn and the piece quickly disappears from the play-bills. This or that romance, once sung at every piano, is now ludicrous ; we find it insipid and discordant ; it is at best only encountered in some remote and antiquated province ; it expresses only some of those evanescent sentiments which a slight variation in customs suffices to do away with ; it has become old-fashioned, and we are surprised at ourselves for having been pleased with such foolish things. Thus, from among the innumerable writings which see the light, time makes its selection ; superficial and slightly persistent characters are borne away with the works which express them.

Other works correspond to characters somewhat more durable, and seem to be masterpieces to the generations which read them. Such was that famous "*Astrée*" which D'Urfé composed at the commencement of the seventeenth century—a pastoral romance, of infinite length and yet greater dulness, a bower of foliage and flowers to which men, weary with the slaughter

and brigandage of religious wars, betook themselves to listen to the sighs and sentimentalities of Celadon. Such were the romances of Mademoiselle de Scudery—the “Grand Cyrus,” and “Clelie,”—in which the exaggerated, refined and measured gallantry introduced into France by the Spanish queens, the noble dissertation on the new language, the mysteries of the heart and the ceremonial of politeness, were displayed like the majestic robes and formal reverences of the Hotel de Rambouillet. Countless works had this kind of merit which to-day are nothing more than historical documents: for example, the “Euphues” of Lilly, the “Adonis” of Marini, the “Hudibras” of Butler, and the biblical pastorals of Gessner. We are not without such writings now-a-days, but I prefer not to mention them; I will only remark that about 1806 “M. Esmenard held at Paris the position of a great man,”* and enumerate the multitude of works which seemed sublime at the beginning of the

* An expression of Stendhal's.

literary revolution of which we now see the end—"Atala," "The Last of the Abencerrages," the "Natchez" and many of Madame de Stäel's and Lord Byron's personages. At present the first stage of the journey has been passed over, and, stationed where we are, we detect without any difficulty the exaggeration and the affectation which contemporaries did not suspect. The celebrated elegy of Millevoye on the "Chute des Feuilles" leaves us as unmoved as the "Messéniennes" of Casimir Delavigne; it is because the two works, half classic and half romantic, corresponded by their mixed character to a generation placed on the frontier of two periods, and their success has had precisely the duration of the moral character which they manifested.

Many very remarkable cases show most clearly how the value of a work increases and decreases with the value of the character expressed. It seems that here nature yoked together experience and counter-experience with premeditated purpose. We might cite writers who have left one work of the first among twenty of the secondary

order. In both cases the talent, the education, the preparation, the effort was all alike ; nevertheless, in the first, there issued from the crucible, an ordinary work ; in the second, a masterpiece saw the light. This is due to the fact that in the first case the writer expressed only superficial and transitory characters, whilst in the second he seized upon enduring and profound characters. Le Sage wrote twelve volumes of romances imitated from the Spanish, and the Abbé Prevost twenty volumes of tragic and pathetic novels ; the curious alone seek these out, while everybody has read Gil Blas and Manon Lescaut. The reason of this is that a happy accident twice brought to the artist's hand a stable type of which every man encounters traits in the society around him or in the sentiments of his own breast. Gil Blas is a bourgeois with a classic education, having passed through all conditions of society and made a fortune, easy in his conscience, somewhat a valet his whole life, a little *picaro* in his youth, accommodating himself to the standard of worldly morality, by

no means a stoic and still less a patriot, securing his own share of the cake and freely biting into that of the public, but gay, sympathetic, no hypocrite, capable occasionally of self-judgment, having fits of honesty with a substratum of honor and benevolence, and winding up with a well-regulated and straight-forward life. A like character, adopting the medium in all things, and a like destiny, so tangled and diversified, is daily encountered and will be again to-morrow as it was in the eighteenth century.—In a similar manner, in *Manon Lescaut*, the courtesan who is an amiable girl, immoral through the craving for luxury, but affectionate by instinct, and capable in the end of returning a love equal to the absolute love which made all sacrifices for her, is a type of so permanent a nature that George Sand in *Leone Leoni* and Victor Hugo in *Marion Delorme* have taken it up to put it again upon the stage, simply reversing the parts and changing the time.—De Foe wrote two hundred volumes, and Cervantes I know not how many dramas and romances, the former with the truth-

ful detail, the minutiae, the dry precision of a puritan business-man, and the latter with the invention, the glow, the insufficiency, the generosity of a Spanish cavalier and adventurer: of the one there remains Robinson Crusoe, and of the other Don Quixote. It is because Robinson Crusoe is, at first, the genuine Englishman completely embodying the profound instincts of the race still visible in the sailor and in the colonial squatter of his country, violent and savage in his resolutions, protestant and biblical at heart, with those silent fermentations of the imagination and of the conscience which lead to crises of conversion and of grace, energetic, obstinate, patient, indefatigable, born for labor, capable of clearing away and colonizing continents; it is because the same personage, apart from national character, presents to the eye the severest experience of human life and an abridgment of all human invention, showing the individual torn from civilized society and constrained to recover by his solitary effort so many arts and so many industries, of which the benefits surround him

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hourly and unconsciously as water surrounds the fish.—In like manner, in Don Quixote we see at first the chivalrous and morbid Spaniard, such as eight centuries of crusades and of overcharged reveries had made him, but, besides this, one of the eternal prototypes of human history, the heroic, sublime, visionary, meager and broken-down idealist: in order to strengthen the impression, and by way of contrast, we see alongside of him the sage, matter-of-fact, vulgar and gross bumpkin.—May I still cite to you another of those immortal personages in which a race and an epoch are recognized, and whose name becomes one of the current terms of a language, the Figaro of Beaumarchais, a kind of Gil Blas more nervous and more revolutionary than the other? And yet the author was simply a man of talent; he was too sparkling with wit to create, like Molière, spirits that live; but, one day, drawing a picture of himself, with his gayety, his expedients, his irreverence, his repartees, his courage, his natural good-heartedness, his inexhaustible vivacity, he has delineated, without so intending

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it, the portrait of the true Frenchman, and his talent rose to genius.—There occur counter verifications, and there are cases where genius descends to talent. Many a writer who knows how to mould and put in motion the greatest personages leaves in his group of figures a crowd of inanimate beings, who, at the end of a century, seem } dead or repulsive, open to ridicule, whose whole interest belongs to antiquaries and historians. For example the lovers of Racine are all marquises; all their character is in their good behavior; their sentiments are so fashioned as to please dandies; he makes them gallants; in his hands they become court-puppets; even now intelligent foreigners cannot endure M. Hippolyte and M. Xiphares.—In the same way the clowns of Shakespeare amuse no more, and his young gentlemen appear extravagant; one must be a critic and an expert in order to place himself at the proper point of view; their play on words is offensive, and their metaphors are unintelligible; their pretentious jargon is a conventionalism of the sixteenth century, as the

refined tirade is one of the proprieties of the seventeenth century. There are also fashionable personages; the exterior and the effect of the hour are so predominant in them that the rest disappear.—You perceive, by this twofold experience, the importance of profound and enduring characters, since a lack of them degrades a great man's work to the second rank, and their presence exalts the work of a lesser talent to the first rank.

It is for this reason that if one goes through the great literary works, he will find that all manifest a profound and durable character, and that their rank is higher according as this character is more durable and more profound.

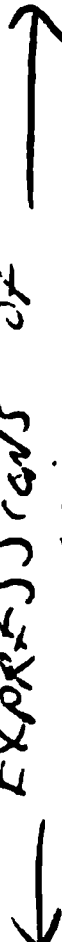
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XX They are generalizations which present to the mind under a sensible form at one time the principal traits of a historical period, at another the primordial instincts and faculties of a race, at another some fragment of the universal man and those elementary psychological forces which are the ultimate explanation of human events. In order to be convinced of this we need not pass

Husman in review the various literary works. It will be sufficient to note the use which is now made of literary works in history. It is through these that the deficiencies of memoirs, constitutions, and diplomatic documents are supplied; they show us with an astonishing precision and clearness, the sentiments of diverse epochs, the instincts and aptitudes of diverse races, all the great secret springs whose equilibrium maintains societies and whose discords lead to revolutions. The positive history and chronology of ancient India are almost useless; but its heroic and sacred poems remain to us, and in these we see its spirit laid bare, that is to say the order and condition of its imagination, the extent and connection of its dreams, the depth and disorder of its philosophical divinations and the inner principle of its religion and of its institutions.—Let us consider Spain at the end of the sixteenth and at the beginning of the seventeenth century. If you read *Lazarillo de Tomès* and the *picaresque* romances, if you study the drama of Lope de Vega, of Calderon and other dramatists, you will

see rising before you two living figures, the beggar and the cavalier, who will show you all the misery, all the grandeur and all the folly of this strange civilization.—The more perfect a work is the deeper are the characteristics portrayed in it. We might extract from Racine the whole system of the monarchical sentiments of our seventeenth century,—the portrait of the king, of the queen, of the children of France, of noble courtiers, ladies of honor, and prelates; all the dominant ideas of the time,—feudal fidelity, chivalric honor, servility of the ante-chamber, the decorum of the palace, the devotion of servants and subjects, the perfection of manners, the sway and tyranny of propriety, the natural and artificial niceties of language, of the heart, of Christianity and of morality; in short, the habits and sentiments which make up the principal traits of the ancient regime.—Our greatest modern epics, the Divine Comedy and Faust, are summaries of two grand European historical epochs. One shows us the way in which the Middle Ages regarded life, and the other the way in

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which we regard it. Both of them express the highest truth to which two sovereign minds, each in its time, attained. Dante's poem depicts the man who, transported outside of this ephemeral world, traverses the supernatural, the sole definitive and subsisting world; he was conducted by two powers, the exalted love which then controlled human life, and systematic theology which was then the queen of speculative thought; his poetic dream, by turns horrible and sublime, is the mystic reverie which then seemed the perfect state of the human mind. Goethe's poem depicts the man who, led through all the ways of science and of life, gets bruised and disgusted, wanders and gropes around, and finally settles down resignedly into practical life without, among so many painful experiences and unsatisfied questionings, ever ceasing to realize behind its legendary veil that superior realm of ideal forms and of incorporeal forces on the threshold of which thought is arrested, and to which alone the divinations of the heart can penetrate. Among so many finished works,

which manifest the essential character of a race or an epoch, there are some which, by a singular chance, express, moreover, some sentiment, some type, common to almost all groups of humanity; such are the Hebrew Psalms that confront the monotheistic man with the Almighty Judge and Sovereign God; the "Imitation" which shows the communion of the tender soul with the loving and consoling Redeemer; the poems of Homer and the dialogues of Plato, which represent the heroic youth of the active man, or the charming adolescence of the reflective man; nearly all that Greek literature which possessed the privilege of representing healthy and simple sentiments; Shakespeare, in fine, the greatest in original creations, the deepest observer of man, the most clear-sighted of all those who have comprehended the mechanism of the human passions, the mute fermentations and the violent explosions of the imaginative brain, the unforeseen derangements of consciousness, the tyranny of the flesh and blood, the fatalities of character and the obscure causes of our sanity and in-

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sanity. Don Quixote, Candide, and Robinson
Crusoe, are books of a like scope. Works of
this class survive the century and the people to
whom they owe their origin. They pass beyond
* the ordinary limits of time and space; they are
understood wherever we find a thinking mind;
their popularity is indestructible and their dura-
tion infinite. A final proof of the connection
between moral and literary values, and of the
principle which arranges the works of art above
or below each other, according to the impor-
tance, the stability and the depth of the historic
or psychological character which they have
expressed.

IV

It is now for us to construct a similar scale for the physical man and for the arts representing him, namely sculpture, and especially painting; pursuing the same method, we shall, at first, seek what are, in the physical man, the most stable characters, since they are the most important ones.

It is clear, in the first place, that a fashionable coat is of very secondary importance; it changes every two years, or at least, every ten years. So is it with dress in general; it is an externality and a decoration; it may be taken off with a turn of the hand; the essential thing in the living form is the living body itself; the rest is accessory and artificial. Other characters which, in this instance, belong to the body itself, are likewise of secondary importance; they are the peculiarities of a profession and of a trade. A blacksmith has other arms than a

lawyer; an officer walks differently from a priest; a countryman who labors all day in the sun has other muscles, another color to his skin, another curve of the spine, other wrinkles on the brow, another air, than the city denizen shut up in a drawing-room or in his counting-room. These characters have unquestionably a certain solidity; man preserves them all his life; once contracted, the wrinkle remains; a very slight accident was sufficient to produce these, and another accident not less slight might have sufficed to remove them. Their sole cause consists of an accident of birth or of education; change the condition, and the *milieu* of the man, and you will find in him opposite peculiarities; the citizen reared like the countryman will have the air of the countryman, and the countryman reared like the citizen will have the air of a citizen. The original character will remain, when thirty years' education will be apparent, if apparent at all, only to the psychologist and moralist; the body will preserve only imperceptible traits of it, and the innate and stable

characters, which are its essence, compose a layer much deeper and wholly unaffected by these passing causes.

Other influences equally affecting the soul leave but a feeble impression on the body; I allude to historical epochs. The system of ideas and of sentiments which engrossed the human brain under Louis XIV. was quite different from that of the present day, but the physical framework differed but slightly; the most we can discover, in consulting the portraits, statues, and engravings of that day, is a more imposing habit of noble and dignified attitudes. That which varies the most is the expression; a Renaissance countenance, such as we see it in the portraits by Bronzino and Van Dyke, is stronger and more simple than a modern face; for the last three centuries the swarm of subtle and fleeting ideas with which we are penetrated, the complexity of our tastes, the feverish uneasiness of our thoughts, the excesses of our cerebral life, the burden of continuous labor, have refined, troubled, and tormented both the face and the expression.

Lastly, if we take long periods we shall be able to detect a certain alteration of the head itself; those physiologists who have measured the skulls of the twelfth century, find them to be of less capacity than our own. But history, which preserves so exact a register of moral variations, only states in mass, and very imperfectly, physical variations. The reason is, that the same alteration of the human animal, morally enormous, is very slight physically; an imperceptible modification of the brain makes a lunatic, a fool, or a man of genius; a social revolution which, at the end of two or three centuries, renews all the springs of the mind and of the will, only slightly affects the organs; and history, which furnishes the means of subordinating to each other the characters of the soul, does not furnish the means for subordinating to each other the characters of the physical being.

We are, consequently, obliged to take another course, and here again it is the principle of the subordination of characters which leads us. You have noticed that when a character is more

stable, it is because it is more elementary ; the cause of its duration is its depth. Let us seek, therefore, in the living form for the characters peculiar to its elements, and for this purpose let me call your attention to a model, such as you have before your eyes in your drawing-schools. Here is a naked man ; what is there that is common to all portions of this animated surface ? What is the element which, repeated and diversified, occurs again and again in each fragment of the whole ? From the point of view of form it is a bone provided with tendons and clothed with muscles, here the omoplate and the clavicle, there the femur and the thigh-bone ; higher up the vertebral column and the skull, each with its articulations, its depressions, its projections, its aptitude for serving as fulcrum or lever, and those coils of retractile muscles which, in turn, shrink and expand in order to communicate to it its different positions and its diverse movements. An articulated skeleton and a covering of muscles, all logically enchained, a superb and intelligent machine for action and for effort, such is

the basis of the visible man. If now you take into account, in considering him, modifications which race, climate, and temperament superadd, softness or rigidity of muscles, diverse proportions of parts, elongation or contraction of body and limbs, you will have in hand the whole interior framework of the body, such as sculpture and drawing take it to be.—Over the naked muscles is extended a second covering, common also to all the parts,—the skin with vibrating papilla undulately blue through its network of small veins, yellow through the transparent casing of the tendons, red through the flow of blood, pearly in contact with the membranous tissues, now smooth and now striated, of a richness and an incomparable variety of tones, luminous in shadow, all palpitating in the light, betraying by its nervous sensibility the delicacy of the soft pulp and the renewal of the fluent flesh, of which it is the transparent veil. If, besides this, you remark the diversities which race, climate, and temperament contribute to it; if you note how in the lymphatic, bilious, or sanguine subject it is

found now tender, flabby, rosy white and wan, now firm, consistent, amber-tinted, and ferruginous, you will grasp the second element of visible life, that which belongs to the domain of the painter, and which the colorist alone can express. These constitute the deep-seated and inner characters of the physical man, and I have no need to point out that they are stable since they are inseparable from the living individual.

V.

To this scale of physical values corresponds, step by step, a scale of plastic values. Moreover, other things being equal, according as the character brought into light by a picture or a statue is more or less important, this picture and this statue are more or less beautiful. This is why you find in the lowest rank, those drawings, aquarelles, pastels, and statuettes, which in man do not depict the man, but his dress, and especially the dress of the day. Illustrated reviews are full of them; they might almost be called fashion-plates; every exaggeration of costume is therein displayed: wasp-like waists, monstrous skirts, overloaded and fantastic head-dresses; the artist is heedless of the deformity of the human body; that which gives him pleasure is the fashion of the moment, the gloss of stuffs, the close fitting of a glove, the perfection of the chignon. Alongside of the scribbler with the pen he is the scribbler with the pencil;

he may have a good deal of talent and wit, but he appeals only to a transient taste; in twenty years his coats will be completely out of date. Countless sketches of this description which, in 1830, were in vogue, are, at the present hour, simply historic or grotesque. Numbers of portraits in our annual exhibitions are nothing but portraits of costumes, and, alongside of the painters of man, are the painters of moire-antique and of satin.

Other painters, although superior to these, still remain on the lower steps of art; or rather they have some talent besides their art; they are badly-placed observers, born to compose romances and studies on society, and who, instead of the pen, have taken up the brush. That which strikes them is the peculiarities of a calling, of a profession, of training, the impress of vice or of virtue, of passion or of habit; Hogarth, Wilkie, Mulready, and hosts of English painters possessed this gift so slightly picturesque and so literary. They see in the physical man only the moral man; with them color,

drawing, truthfulness, and the beauty of the living body, are subordinate. It suffices for them to represent by forms, attitudes and colors, at one time the frivolity of a fashionable woman, at another the honest sorrow of an old steward, at another the debasement of a gambler, and innumerable petty dramas or comedies of real life, all instructive or diverting, and almost all with a view to inspire good sentiments or to correct abuses. Properly speaking, they delineate nothing but spirits, minds, and emotions. They incline so strongly to this side as to outrage form and render it inflexible; frequently their pictures are caricatures, and always illustrations, the illustrations to a village idyl, or to a domestic romance which Burns, Fielding, or Dickens might better have written. The same prepossessions attend them when treating historical subjects; they treat them not as painters, but as historians, in order to display the moral sentiments of a personage or of an epoch,—the expression of a Lady Russell contemplating her condemned husband piously receiving the sacra-

X { ment, the despair of Edith with the swan's neck on discovering Harold among the dead at Hastings. Composed of archeological researches and of psychological documents, their work appeals only to archeologists and to psychologists, or at least, to the curious and to philosophers. At most, it answers the purpose of a satire or of a drama; the spectator is made to laugh or to weep, as at the fifth act of a play on the stage. It is evident, nevertheless, that this order of art is eccentric; it is an encroachment of painting on literature, or rather an invasion of literature on the domain of painting. Our artists of the school of 1830, Delaroche among the first, fell, although less gravely, into the same mistake. { The beauty of a plastic work is, above all, plastic, and an art always degenerates when, discarding its own peculiar means for exciting interest, it borrows those of another art.

I now come to the great example in which are combined all others, namely, the history of painting in general, and foremost, of that Italian painting, on which I have been commenting for

the past three years. A series of proofs and counter-proofs here shows during five hundred years the picturesque value of the character which the theory prescribes as the essence of the physical man. At one particular time the human animal,—the bony framework covered with muscles, the sensitive and colored flesh and skin,—were comprehended and animated for themselves alone, and above everything else; this is the grand epoch; the works it has left to us pass for the most beautiful in the judgment of all; all schools resort to them in quest of models and to be instructed. At other epochs the idea of the figure is, at one time, incomplete, and at another mingled with other preoccupations and subordinated to other preferences; these are the periods of infancy, of transformation, or of decadence; however richly endowed artists may be, they execute at such times only inferior or secondary works; their talent is not wisely applied; they have not caught, or they have imperfectly caught, the fundamental character of the visible man. Thus is the value of the

[work, in all directions, proportionate to the domination of this character ; it is important for the writer, above all things, to produce living characters ; and it is equally important for the [sculptor and the painter to create living bodies.

It is according to this principle that you have seen classed the successive periods of art. From Cimabue to Masaccio the painter ignores perspective, modelling and anatomy ; he contemplates the palpable and solid body only through a veil ; consistency, vitality, the moving framework, the acting muscles of the trunk and of the limbs do not interest him ; personages, with him, consist of outlines and of shadows of men, and, sometimes, of glorified and incorporeal spirits.

[The religious sentiment prevails over the plastic instinct ; it portrays to the eye theological symbols with Taddeo Gaddi, moralities with Orcagna, and seraphic visions with Fra Angelico.

The painter, arrested by the spirit of the middle ages, remains and gropes a long time at the door of great art.—When he enters, it is through the discovery of perspective, through the search for

relief, through the study of anatomy, through the use of oil, in the persons of Paolo Uccello, Masaccio, Fra Filippo Lippi, Antonio Pollaiuolo, Verocchio, Ghirlandajo, Antonello de Messine, almost all of them pupils in a goldsmith's shop, friends and successors of Donatello, Ghiberti, and other great sculptors of the age, all passionately devoted to the study of the human figure, all pagan admirers of muscles and animal energy, so penetrated by the sentiment of physical life that their works, although stiff, defaced, and infected with literal imitation, secure for them a unique position, and still maintain to-day their full value. The masters who have surpassed them have done no more than develop their principle; the glorious school of the Florentine renaissance recognizes them for its founders; Andrea del Sarto, Fra Bartolomeo, Michael Angelo, are their pupils; Raphael resorted to them to study, and one-half of his genius belongs to them. There is the centre of Italian art, and of high art. The master idea of all these artists is that of the living, healthy, ener-

getic, active body, endowed with every athletic and animal aptitude. "The important thing in the art of drawing," says Cellini, "is to make a good drawing of a naked man and woman." He speaks with enthusiasm of the admirable bones of the head; "of the omoplates which, when the arm makes an effort, describe lines of magnificent effect; of the five false ribs which, when the torso bends forward or backward, form such wonderful depressions and projections around the navel." "Thou must then draw the bone situated between the two thighs, it is very beautiful, and is called the crupper, or sacrum." One of the pupils of Verocchio, Nanni Grosso, on dying in the hospital, rejected an ordinary crucifix presented to him, demanding to have one by Donatello brought, declaring that "otherwise he would die unshrived, so disagreeable to him were the badly executed works of his art." Luca Signorelli, having lost a beloved son, caused his corpse to be stripped and made a minute drawing of all its muscles; these were to him the essential of the man, and he stamped

on his memory those of his own child.—At this moment, one step only remains to be taken in order to complete the physical man : more stress must be laid on the coating of the muscles, on the softness and tone of the living skin, on the delicate and varied vitality of the sensitive flesh : Correggio and the Venetians take this step and art stands still. Thenceforth, art is in full bloom, the sentiment of the human body has attained to its completest expression. It de-clines gradually ; we see it decreasing, losing a portion of its sincerity and its gravity under Julio Romano, Rosso, and Primaticcio, and then degenerate into school conventionalism, academic traditions and studio prescriptions. From this moment art becomes transformed, notwith-standing the well-meaning studious disposition of the Caracci ; it becomes less plastic and more literary. The three Caracci, their pupils or their successors, Dömenichino, Guido, Guercino and Baroccio, aim at dramatic effects, bleeding martyrs, pathetic scenes and sentimental expressions. The insipidities of sigisbeism and of

devotion mingle with reminiscences of the heroic style. You find graceful heads and beatific smiles over athletic bodies and strained muscles. The airs and the affectations of society peer out in dreamy Madonnas, in pretty Herodias and in fascinating Magdalens commissioned by the taste of the day. Painting, which is declining, strives to render delicacies which the growing opera is about to express. Albano is a boudoir painter ; Dolci, Cigoli and Sassoferrato are delicate, and almost modern, spirits. With Pietro da Cortona and Luca Giordano the grand scenes of pagan or Christian legend become transformed into agreeable masquerades for the drawing-room ; the artist is nothing but a brilliant, amusing, fashionable improvisator, the art of painting coming to an end at the same time that the art of music begins, that is to say, when the human brain ceases to contemplate the energies of the body, in order to turn to the emotions of the heart.

If now you turn to the great foreign schools, you will find that their perfection and their

excellence were based upon the predominance of the same character, and that the same sentiment of physical life engendered the masterpieces of art in the north and throughout Italy. That which distinguishes the schools among each other is the representation by each of a temperament, the temperament of its climate and of its country. The genius of the masters consists in fashioning a race of bodies ; thus regarded, they are physiologists as writers are psychologists ; they expose every variety and all the consequences of the bilious, the lymphatic, the nervous or the sanguine temperament, as the great novelists and the great dramatists expose every reaction and every diversity of the imaginative, reflective, civilized, or uncultured soul. You are familiar in the works of the Florentine artists with the erect, slender, muscular type, noble in instinct and with gymnastic aptitudes, such as may be evolved from a sober, graceful, active race, subtle in intellect and on a dry soil. I have shown you in the Venetian artists the rounded, undulatory, and regularly developed

forms, the flesh ample and white, the hair ruddy or blond, the type sensual, sprightly and contented, such as may be evolved in a moist and luminous region among Italians whose climate resembles that of the Flemings, and who are poets in the matter of voluptuousness. You may see in Rubens the white or the pale, the rosy or the ruddy German, lymphatic, sanguine, carnivorous, and a great consumer, a man of a northern and watery soil, liberally fashioned, but not clumsy; of irregular and plethoric shape, redundant in flesh, of brutal and unbridled instincts, whose flabby pulp suddenly reddens with the flux of emotion, becomes easily modified by the severities of the atmosphere and horribly disorganized in the hands of death. The Spanish painters will place before your eyes the type of their race, the wiry and nervous animal with firm muscles hardened by the blasts of their sierras and their scorching sun, tenacious and indomitable, boiling with suppressed passion, all aglow with inward fire, dark, austere and spare; among confused tones of sombre

stuffs and of dark clouds which suddenly open in order to disclose an exquisite rose, the bright carnation of youth, beauty, love and enthusiasm diffusing itself over the blooming cheeks. The greater the artist the more profoundly does he manifest the temperament of his race: without any suspicion of it he, like the poet, furnishes to history the most fruitful documents; he extracts and amplifies the essential of the physical being as the other extracts and amplifies the essential of the moral being, while the historian discerns in pictures the structure and corporeal instincts of a people as he discerns in literature the structure and spiritual aptitudes of a civilization.

VI.

The concordance, then, is complete, and characters bear with them into a work of art the value which they already possess in nature. According as they possess in themselves a greater or less value, they communicate a greater

or less value to the work. When they traverse the intellect of the writer or of the artist, in order to pass from the real world into the ideal world, they lose nothing of what they are; they are found to be the same after as before the journey; they are, as before, greater or lesser forces, more or less resistant to attack, and capable of effects more or less vast and profound. We now comprehend why the hierarchy of works of art repeats their hierarchy. At the apex of nature are sovereign forces which master all others; at the apex of art are masterpieces which surpass all others; both heights are on a level, and the sovereign forces of nature are declared through the masterpieces of art.

§ 2.

**THE DEGREE OF BENEFICENCE IN THE
CHARACTER.**

I.

THERE is a second point of view from which characters ought to be compared. They are natural forces, and, in this respect, they may be estimated in two ways: we may consider a force, first, in relation to other forces, and next in relation to itself. Considered in relation to other forces it is greater when it resists them and nullifies them; considered in relation to itself it is greater when the course of its effects leads it not to diminish but to increase itself. It thus finds two standards, because it is subjected to two tests, at first in undergoing the effect of other forces, and next in undergoing its own effect. The first examination has shown us the first test, and the higher or lower rank which characters bear according as they are more or less durable, and which, subjected to the same destructive causes, last longer and more intact. A second examination will show us the second test, and the more or less exalted position char-

acters obtain according as, abandoned to themselves, they more or less completely end in annihilation, or in their own development through the annihilation or development of the individual and of the group in which they are comprised.

In the first instance we have descended step by step toward those elementary forces which constitute the principle of nature itself, and you have seen the relationship between art and science.

In the second instance we shall ascend step by step toward those superior forms which are the object of nature and in which you will see the relationship of art with the moral order of things.

We have considered characters according as they are more or less ~~important~~; we are about to consider characters according as they are more or less beneficent.

Let us commence with the moral man and with the works of art which express him. It is evident that the characters with which he is endowed are more or less beneficent, malevolent, or mixed. We see daily individuals and communities prosper, add to their power, fail in their enterprises,

ruin themselves and perish ; and each time if we view their life in its entirety we find that their fall is explained by some vice of general structure, by some exaggeration of a tendency, by the disproportion between a situation and an aptitude, in the same way as their success is caused by the stability of the inward balance, by the moderation of some craving or the energy of some faculty. In the stormy current of life characters are weights or floats which at one time make us glide along the bottom, and at another maintain us on the surface. Thus is a second scale established ; characters here are classified according as they are more or less baneful or beneficial to us through the magnitude of the help or hindrance which they contribute to our life in order to preserve or to destroy it.

X The object, then, is to live, and, for the individual, life has two principal directions, knowledge and action ; and this is why we can distinguish in him two principal faculties, intelligence and will. Hence it follows that all the characters of the will and of the understanding which aid

pragmatic

man in action and in knowledge are beneficent, and their opposites are malevolent. In the philosopher and the savant it is the exact observation and memory of details joined to the prompt forecasting of general laws, and to the scrupulous prudence which subjects every supposition to the control of prolonged and methodical verifications. In the statesman and the business-man it is the tact of the pilot, always on the alert and always certain; it is the tenacity of common sense, the constant adaptation of the mind to the variations of things, a sort of inward balance ready to test all circumjacent forces, an imagination limited and reduced to practical contrivances, the imperturbable instinct of the possible and of the real. In the artist it is delicate sensibility, and vibrating sympathy, the inner and involuntary reproduction of things, the sudden and original comprehension of their dominant character with the spontaneous generation of all surrounding harmonies. You might find for each species of intellectual effort a group of analogous and distinct dispositions. These are so many forces

which lead man on to his ends, and it is clear
that each one in its domain is beneficent since its
alteration, its insufficiency, or its absence brings
to this domain impoverishment and sterility.—

In a like manner and in the same sense, the will ~~is~~
is a power, and, considered in itself, a good.
We admire the firm resolve which, once taken,
maintains itself invincible against the pangs of
physical pain, against the persistence of moral
suffering, against the perturbations of sudden
shocks, against the charm of tempting seductions,
against every diversity of the ordeal by which,
through violence or tenderness, through mental
excitement or bodily weakness, it is attempted to
overcome it. Whatever its support may be,
whether the ecstasy of martyrs, the reason of
stoics, the insensibility of savages, native stub-
bornness, or acquired pride, it is beautiful; and
not merely is every phase of intelligence, lucidi-
ty, genius, wit, reason, tact, delicacy, but again
every phase of will, courage, the initiative, activ-
ity, firmness, coolness, are fragments of the ideal
man which we now seek to construct because

they are lines of this beneficent character which we have at first traced.

We must now view this man as he is classed. What is the disposition that is to render his life a benefit to the society in which he is comprised?

We are familiar with the inward instruments which are useful to him ; where is the internal spring which is to render him useful to others?

* One there is which is unique, the faculty of loving ; for to love, is to have for one's end the happiness of another, to subordinate one's self to that other, and labor for and devote one's self to his welfare. You recognize there the highest of all beneficent characters. It is, evidently, the first of all in the scale that we are forming. We are all affected at its aspect, whatever may be its form, whether generosity, humanity, sweetness, tenderness, or native goodness. Our sympathy stirs in its presence, whatever its object may be, whether it constitutes love, properly so called—the full surrender of one human being to another of the opposite sex, and the union of two lives bound up in one ; whether it culminates

in diverse family affections—that between parents and children, or between brother and sister; whether it produces strong friendship, perfect confidence, and the mutual fidelity of two men not bound together by the ties of blood. The more vast is its object, the more do we find it beautiful. It is because its beneficence extends itself along with the group to which it is applied. Hence it is that in history and in life we reserve our greatest admiration for that devotion which is rendered in behalf of general interests—for patriotism such as was seen in Rome in the time of Hannibal; in Athens, in the time of Themistocles; in France, in 1792; and in Germany, in 1813; for the great sentiment of universal charity, which has led Buddhist and Christian missionaries among barbarian people; for that impassioned zeal which has sustained so many disinterested inventors, and excited in art, in science, in philosophy, in practical life all beautiful and useful works and institutions; for all those superior virtues which, under the name of probity, justice, honor, self-

sacrifice, and self-subordination to some high, all-embracing conception, develops the civilization of humanity, and of which the stoics, Marcus Aurelius in the foremost rank, have given us both precept and example. I have no need to show you how, in the scale thus constructed, opposite characters occupy the reverse position. Long has this order of things been realized. The noble, moral theories of antiquity established it with an incomparable wise discernment and simplicity of method; Cicero, with a common sense wholly Roman, has summed it up in his treatise on the "Offices." If subsequent ages have contributed to it further developments, they have mingled with these many errors; and, in morality as in art, we have always to resort to the ancients in order to obtain our maxims. The philosophers of that period declared that the stoic made his soul and intellect conform to those of Jupiter;* the men of that day might have longed to have Jupiter make his soul and intellect conform to those of the stoic.

* Συζην θεοις.

II,

To this classification of moral values corresponds, step by step, a classification of literary values. All things equal in other respects, the work which expresses a beneficent character, is superior to the work which expresses a malevolent character. If, in two given works, both exhibit, with the same talent in execution, natural forces of like grandeur, that which represents to us a hero is better than that which represents to us a dolt; and in this gallery of living works of art, which form the definitive museum of the human mind, you will see established, according to our new principle, a new order of ranks.

At the lowest step of all are the types preferred by the literature of realism and by the comic drama; that is to say, simpletons and egotists—limited, weak and inferior natures. They are those, in fact, encountered in ordinary

life, or those that can be turned into ridicule. Nowhere will you find a more complete assemblage than in the "Scènes de la vie bourgeoise" of Henri Monnier. Almost all good romances thus recruit their secondary personages; such as the Sancho of Don Quixote; the seedy sharpers of the *picaresque* romances; Fielding's squires, parsons, and servants; and Walter Scott's shrewd lairds and rigid ministers; all of that lower class of figures swarming in Balzac's *Comédie Humaine*, and in contemporary English literature, will supply us with further examples.

These writers, undertaking to depict men as they are, were obliged to portray them incomplete, mixed up and inferior, most of the time abortive in their character, or distorted by their condition. As to the comic drama it is sufficient to cite Turcaret, Basile, Orgon, Arnolphe, Harpagon, Tartuffe, Georges Dandin, all of the marquises, valets, pedants, and doctors in Molière. It is the quality of the comic drama to lay bare human deficiencies. Great artists, however, on whom the exigences of their class of subjects, or

a love of strict truth, imposed studies of this sad kind, have made use of two artifices to conceal the mediocrity and repulsiveness of the characters they have figured. They have either made of them accessories or contrasts, which serve to bring out some principal figure in stronger relief—the most frequent proceeding of novelists—and which you may study in the “Don Quixote” of Cervantes, in Balzac’s “Eugénie Grandet,” and in the “Madame Bovary” of Gustave Flaubert; or they have turned our sympathies against the personage, causing him to descend from one mishap to another, exciting against him the disapprobatory and vengeful laugh, purposely showing off the unlucky consequences of his inaptitude, and hunting out and expelling from life the defect which dominates in him. The spectator, become hostile, is satisfied; he experiences the same pleasure in seeing folly and egotism crushed, as he does in seeing an expansion of goodness and strength; the banishment of an evil is worth a triumph of the good. This is the great resource of comedians,

but novelists likewise make use of it; and you may see its success not merely in the *Précieuses*, the “Ecole des Femmes,” the “Femmes Savantes,” and numerous other pieces by Molière, but again in the “Tom Jones” of Fielding, Dickens’ “Martin Chuzzlewit,” and in the “Vieille Fille” by Balzac. The spectacle, nevertheless, of these belittled or crippled spirits ends by leaving in the reader’s mind a vague sentiment of weariness and disgust, and even irritation and bitterness. When they are very numerous in a work, and occupy the prominent place, one is disheartened. Sterne, Swift, and the comic writers of the Restoration, many contemporary comedies and romances, the scenes of Henri Monnier, finally repel you; the admiration or approval of the reader gets to be mingled with repugnance; it is disagreeable to see vermin even when we kill it, and we demand that we be shown creations of a more vigorous birth and of loftier character.

At this point of the scale is placed a family of powerful but incomplete types, and generally

wanting in balance. Some passion, some faculty, some disposition or other of mind or of character is developed in them with enormous accretion, like a hypertrophied organ, at the expense of the rest, amidst all sorts of ravages and misfortunes. Such is the ordinary theme of dramatic and philosophic literature; for the personages thus moulded are the best suited to furnish the writer with affecting and terrible circumstances, with the collision and revolutions of sentiments, and the inward tribulation of which he has need for his drama; and, on the other hand, they are the best adapted to manifest to the thinker the mechanisms of thought, the fatalities of organization, all the obscure forces which act in us without our consciousness of them, and which are the blind sovereigns of our being. You will find them among the Greek, Spanish, and French tragedians, in Lord Byron and Victor Hugo, in most of the great novelists, from Don Quixote down to Werther and Madame Bovary. All those have set forth the disproportion between man and himself, and with the

world, the dominion of some mastering passion or idea: in Greece, pride, revenge, warring rage, murderous ambition, filial vengeance, all the natural and spontaneous sentiments; in Spain and in France, chivalric honor, exalted love, religious fervor, all the monarchical and cultivated sentiments; and in Europe of our day, the inner malady of man discontented with himself and with society. But nowhere has this race of vehement and suffering spirits propagated itself in species more vigorous, more perfect, and more distinct than with the two great judges of man, Shakespeare and Balzac. That which they always depict from choice is some gigantic force self-destructive or destructive of another. Ten times out of twelve the principal personage is a maniac or a knave; he is endowed with the strongest and subtlest faculties, and sometimes with the most generous and most delicate sentiments; but through a defectiveness of inward organization, or through lack of superior direction, these forces either lead to his ruin, or unchain themselves, to the detriment of others:

either the superb engine explodes, or it injures those it encounters on its way. In enumerating the heroes of Shakespeare, Coriolanus, Hotspur, Hamlet, Lear, Timon, Leontes, Macbeth, Othello, Antony, Cleopatra, Romeo, Juliet, Desdemona, Ophelia, we find all, the most heroic and the purest, swept away either by the fury of a blind imagination, the agitations of frenzied sensibility, the tyranny of flesh and blood, mental hallucination, or the irresistible flood of rage or of love, to which must be added the perverted and carnivorous souls who spring like lions on the human flock, Iago, Richard III., and Lady Macbeth, all those who have expelled from their veins the last drop of "the milk of human kindness;" and you will find in Balzac the two corresponding groups of figures, on the one hand the monomaniacs Hulot, Claës, Goriot, Cousin Pons, Louis Lambert, Grandet, Gobseck, Sarrazine, Frauenhofer, Gambara, collectors, lovers, artists, and misers; and on the other, the beasts of prey Nucingen, Vautrin, du Tillet, Philippe Bridau, Rastignac, du Marsay, and the Marneffes,

male and female, usurers, sharpers, courtezans, business-men, and ambitious characters, powerful and monstrous specimens throughout, generated from the same ideas as those of Shakspeare, but brought forth in greater travail in an atmosphere breathed and vitiated by more human generations, with a less youthful blood, and with every deformity, every disease, and every blemish of an older civilization. These, among literary works, are the most profound; they manifest better than others the important characters, the elementary forces, the deepest strata of human nature. In reading them we experience a kind of grandiose emotion, that of a man let into the secret of things, admitted to the contemplation of the laws which govern the soul, society, and history. Notwithstanding this, they leave on the mind a painful impression; we behold too much misery and too many crimes; the passions developed and in mortal encounter display too great ravages. Before opening the book we contemplated things on their outside, tranquilly and mechanically, like a worthy citizen

gazing on a customary and monotonous parade of troops. The writer has taken our hand and conducted us to the battle-field; we see the shock of armies beneath murderous volleys of musketry, and the soil is strewn with their dead.

Advancing a step further, we encounter complete personages, true heroes. We find many such in the dramatic and philosophic literature of which I have just spoken to you. Shakespeare and his contemporaries have multiplied perfect images of feminine innocence, goodness, virtue, and delicacy; down through every successive age their conceptions have reappeared under diverse forms in English romance and drama, the latest of the descendants of Miranda and Imogen being found in the Esthers and the Agnes of Dickens. Pure and noble characters are not wanting in Balzac himself; Margaret Claës, Eugénie Grandet, the Marquis d'Espars, and the Médecin de Campagne are models. We might even find many writers in the vast range of literature who have intentionally brought on

the stage lofty characters and beautiful sentiments, such as Corneille, Richardson, and George Sand, the one in *Polyeucte*, the *Cid*, and the *Horatii*, in representing dialectic heroism ; the other in *Pamela*, *Clarissa*, and *Grandison*, in giving voice to protestant virtue ; the other in *Mauprat*, *François le Champi*, the *Mare au Diable*, *Jean de la Roche*, and so many other recent works, in depicting native generosity. Sometimes, finally, a superior artist like Goethe in his *Hermann and Dorothea*, and especially in his *Iphigenia*, Tennyson in the *Idyls of the King* and in the *Princess*, have attempted to aspire to the highest point of the ideal. But while we have fallen from it, they return to it only through the curiosity of artists, the abstractions of recluses, and the researches of archæologists. As to the rest, when they bring perfect personages on the stage, it is at one time as moralists and at another as observers. In the former case, in order to sustain a thesis with an evident tinge of coldness or of predilection ; in the latter case, with a commingling of human traits, radical imper-

fections, local prejudices, and ancient, proximate, or possible errors, which brings the ideal near to the real figure, but which tarnishes the splendor of its beauty. The atmosphere of advanced civilizations is not congenial to it; it appears elsewhere, in epic and in popular literature, when inexperience and ignorance allow the imagination its full flight. There is an epoch for each of the three groups of types, and for each of the three groups of literary productions; they are originated, the one at the decline, the other during the maturity, and the other in the first stage of a civilization. At highly cultivated and very refined epochs, in nations somewhat decrepit, in the age of hetairæ, in Greece, in the saloons of Louis XIV., and in our own, appear the lowest and the truest types, a comic and realistic literature. At mature epochs, when society is at its full development, when man stands midway in some grand career, in Greece in the fifth century (B. C.), in Spain and in England at the end of the sixteenth, in France in the seventeenth century and to-day, appear the robust

and enduring types, a dramatic and philosophic literature. In the intermediary epochs, which are on the one side a maturity and on the other a decline—the present day, for example—the two ages commingle through a reciprocal encroachment, and each of them engenders the creations of the other, together with its own. But creations truly ideal are fertile only in primitive and simple epochs; and it is always at remote ages, at the origin of peoples, amidst the dreams of human infancy, that we must ascend in order to find heroes and gods. Each people has its own; it has brought them forth from its own heart, it nourishes them with its own legends, and, in proportion as it advances into the unexplored solitude of new ages and of future history, their immortal images shine before its eyes like so many beneficent genii appointed to conduct and protect it. Such are the heroes of the genuine
epics—Siegfried in the “Nibelungen,” Roland in our old *chansons de geste*,” the Cid in the “Romancero,” Rostan in the “Livre des Rois,” Antar in Arabia, Ulysses and Achilles in

Greece. Farther up, and in a higher sphere, are the revelators, saviors, and gods, those of Greece depicted in the Homeric poems, those of India dimly visible in the Vedic hymns, in the epics of antiquity, in Buddhist legends, those of Judea and of Christianity represented in the Psalms, in the Gospel, in the Apocalypse, and in that continuous chain of poetic confessions of which the last and the purest links are the "Fioretti" and the "Imitation." There, man transfigured and ennobled, attains all his plenitude; deified or divine he lacks nothing. If his mind, his strength, or his goodness have limits, it is in our eyes and from our point of view. They do not exist in the eyes of his race and of his age; whatever the imagination had conceived, faith imparted to him; he is at the zenith, and, all abreast of him at the zenith of works of art, are placed sublime and genuine works which have borne his idea without bending under its weight.

III.

Let us now consider the physical man with the arts which portray him, and seek what are for him beneficent characters. The first of all, without doubt, is perfect health, even exuberant health. A suffering, emaciated, languid, attenuated body is more feeble; that which we call the living animal is a mass of organs with a mass of functions: every partial arrest is a step toward total arrest; illness is incipient destruction, an approach to death.—For the same reason it is necessary to class the integrity of the natural type among beneficent characters, and this remark leads us very far toward the conception of a perfect body. For it not only excludes from it gross deformities, deviations of the spine and of the limbs, and all of the vile which a pathological museum can present, but also the slight changes a trade, a profession, and social life can introduce into the inward and outward relations of

the individual. A blacksmith has arms too long; a stonecutter has the spine curved; a pianist has hands furrowed with tendons and veins, lengthened to excess and terminating by flattened fingers; a lawyer, a physician, an official and a business man bears in his relaxed muscles and on his drawn visage the universal stamp of his cerebral and sedentary life. The effects of costume, and especially of modern costume, are not less injurious; it is only a loose floating vestment, easily and often abandoned, the sandal, the chlamys, the antique peplum, which does not incommode the natural body. Our shoes squeeze together the toes of the foot which are hollowed out on their sides by the contact; the corsets and boddices of our women contract their shape. Observe men bathing in summer, and enumerate the many melancholy or grotesque deformities, among others the crude and pallid color of the skin; it has lost its adaptability to light, its tissue is no longer firm; it shivers and roughens at the slightest breath of air; it is exiled, and is no longer in harmony with sur-

rounding objects ; it differs as much from healthy flesh as a stone recently taken from a quarry differs from a rock a long time exposed to rain and sunshine : both have lost their natural tone and are disinterments. Follow out this principle to the end : by dint of discarding all the changes which civilization imposes on the natural body you will see appear the primary lineaments of the perfect body.

Now let us see it at work. Its motion and action are one. We will enumerate then all its capacities of physical motion as beneficial attributes ; it is necessary that it should be apt and ready for all the exercises and uses of force, to have the framework, the proportions of members, the fulness of chest, the suppleness of articulations and muscular resistance necessary to run, jump, carry, strike, combat, and resist effort and fatigue. We will give it all these corporeal perfections without making the one detrimental to the other ; they shall all exist in it in the highest degree, but balanced and harmonious : it is not necessary that force should imply weak-

ness and that in order to be developed it should be diminished. This is not yet all. To athletic aptitudes and to gymnastic-preparation we shall add a soul, that is to say, a will, intelligence, and a heart. The moral being is the term and the flower, as it were, of the physical animal: if the former were lacking the latter would not be complete; the plant would seem a failure, it would not have its supreme crown, and a body so perfect is not finished except by a perfect soul.* We shall show this soul in all the economy of the body, in attitude, in the form of the head, in the expression of the countenance; we shall feel that it is free and healthy, or superior and grand. We shall divine its intelligence, its energy and its nobleness; but we shall do no more than divine them. We shall indicate them, we shall not put them forth prominently: we cannot put them

* *Ψυχὴ ἐντελεχεία σώματος φυσικοῦ οργανίχου.*—This definition of Aristotle, so profound, might have been written by all the Grecian sculptors; it is the mother-idea of Hellenic civilization.

forth prominently ; if we attempted it we should injure the perfect body that we desire to represent. For spiritual life in man is opposed to corporeal life ; when he is superior in the former he is inferior or subordinate in the latter ; he regards himself as a soul embarrassed with a body, his frame becomes an accessory ; in order to think more freely he sacrifices it, he shuts it up in a workshop, he lets it shrivel or become relaxed ; he is even ashamed of it, his excessive modesty covers it up and he conceals it almost entirely ; he ceases to recognize it, he no longer sees but the thinking or the expressive organs, the skull-coating of the brain, the physiognomical interpreter of the emotions ; the rest is an appendage hidden by the robe or by the coat. High civilization, complete development, profound elaboration of the soul cannot be in keeping with an athletic, naked body skilled in gymnastics. The meditative brow, delicacy of feature, the wrinkled physiognomy would be out of place with the members of a wrestler and athlete. For this reason when we would imagine a perfect

body we should take man at this epoch and in this intermediary situation, where the soul has not yet relegated the body to a secondary place, where thought is a function and not a tyranny, where the mind is not yet a disproportionate and monstrous organ, where a balance is maintained among all the parts of human activity, where life flows ample and moderate, like a beautiful stream, between the inadequacy of the past and the outbursts of the future.

IV.

According to this order of physical values, we may class the works of art which represent the physical man, and show that, all things being equal in other respects, the works will be more or less beautiful according as they shall more or less completely express the characters whose presence is a benefit to the body.

At the lowest step is found the art which,

intentionally, suppresses them all. It begins with the fall of ancient paganism, and lasts until the Renaissance. From the epoch of Commodus and of Diocletian you see sculpture profoundly deteriorated; imperial and consular busts lose their serenity and their nobleness; surliness, agitation and languor, bloated cheeks and elongated necks, individual convulsiveness and the wear and tear of the occupation replace harmonious health and energetic activity. You arrive gradually at the mosaics and the paintings of Byzantine art; at the emaciated, lank, and stiffened Christs and *Panagia*, mere manikins, oftentimes veritable skeletons, whose cavernous eyes, large white corneas, thin lips, meager face, low brow, spare and inert hands give the impression of a consumptive and idiotic ascetic. In a lesser degree the same malady prevails throughout the art of the middle ages; on looking at the stained-glass, the statues in cathedrals and at primitive paintings, it seems as if the human race had degenerated, and that human blood

had become impoverished; consumptive saints, dislocated martyrs, flat-breasted virgins with too long feet and knotty hands, dried-up recluses empty of all substance, Christs which seem crushed and bloody annelides, processions of dull, hardened, and gloomy people, on whom are impressed all the deformities of misery and all the constraints of oppression. When, on drawing near to the Renaissance, the human plant, utterly emaciated and distorted, begins again to vegetate, it does not immediately recover itself; its sap is not yet pure. Health and energy do not re-enter the human body except by degrees; it requires a century in order to cure it of its inveterate scrofula.

Among the masters of the fifteenth century you still find numerous signs which denote the ancient consumption and the immemorial fast: in Hemling, at the Bruges hospital, faces quite out of the monastic pale, heads too big, brows bulging out through the exaggerations of mystic reverie, meager arms, the monotonous pla-

idity of a passive life preserved like a pale flower in the shade of the cloister; in Fra Angelico attenuated bodies hidden beneath radiant copes and robes, reduced to the condition of beatified phantoms, no breasts, elongated heads and protuberant brows; in Albert Durer thighs and arms too thin, bellies too large, ungraceful feet, anxious, wrinkled and worn countenances, pale and wan Adams and Eves, all chilly and benumbed, to whom one would like to give clothes; among almost all, this form of the skull which recalls the fakirs or the hydrocephalous, and those hideous infants, scarcely viable, a species of tadpole, whose enormous head is prolonged by a flabby body, and then by a slender appendage of wriggled and twisted members. The early masters of the Italian Renaissance, the true restorers of ancient paganism, the Florentine anatomists Antonio Pollaiolo, Verocchio, Luca Signorelli, all the predecessors of Leonardo da Vinci, themselves retain a remnant of the original blemish: in their figures the vulgarity

of the heads, the ugliness of the feet, the projections of the knees and of the clavicles, the ridges of the muscles, the painful and contorted attitude, all show that strength and health, restored to their throne, have not brought back with them all their companions, and that they are still wanting in two muses, those of ease and serenity. When, at length, the goddesses of antique beauty, all recalled from exile, resume over art their legitimate sway, they are found sovereign only in Italy; in the North their authority is intermittent or incomplete. The Germanic nations only half recognize it; still is it necessary, as in Flanders, that they should be Catholics; the Protestants, as in Holland, free themselves from it altogether. The latter better appreciate truth than beauty; they prefer important characters to beneficent characters, the life of the spirit to the life of the body, the depths of individual personality to the regularity of the general type, the intense and disturbed dream to clear and harmonious contemplation, the

poesy of inward sentiment to the exterior delight of the senses. Rembrandt, the greatest painter of this race, has recoiled from no physical ugliness and deformity: begrimed visages of Jews and usurers, the crooked spines and bandy legs of beggars and cripples, slovenly cooks whose gross flesh still shows marks of the corset, bowed knees and flabby bellies, hospital subjects and shreds and tatters, Hebrew incidents which seem copied in a Rotterdam hovel, scenes of temptation where Potiphar's wife, jumping out of bed, makes the spectator comprehend Joseph's flight; bold and painful grasp of the naked reality however repulsive. Such painting, when it is successful, goes beyond painting; like that of Fra Angelico, Albert Durer and Hemling, it is a poesy; the object of the artist is to manifest a religious emotion, philosophic divinations, a general conception of life; the human form, the proper object of the plastic arts, is sacrificed; it is subordinated to an idea or to some other element of art. In-

deed, with Rembrandt, the chief interest of the picture is not man, but the tragedy of expiring, diffused, palpitating light incessantly competing with invading shadow. But if, quitting these extraordinary or eccentric geniuses, we consider the human body as the true object of picturesque imitation we must recognize that the painted or sculptured figures which lack force, health, and the rest of corporeal perfections, descend, taken in themselves, to the lowest degree of art.

Around Rembrandt is a group of painters of inferior genius, and who are called the minor Flemings, Ostade, Teniers, Gerard Dow, Adrien Brouwer, Jans Steen, De Hoogh, Terburg, Metz and many others. Their personages, ordinarily, consist of the *bourgeois* or the lower class of people; they have taken them just as they saw them in the markets and in the streets, in houses and in taverns; fat, well-to-do burgomasters, respectable lymphatic ladies, spectacled schoolmasters, busy cooks, corpulent innkeepers, merry tipplers, clowns,

boors and bumpkins of the stable and the farm, the shop and the tavern. Louis XIV. seeing them in his gallery exclaimed, "Take away those low fellows!" The personage, in short, they depicted is a body of an inferior species, cool in blood, wan and of reddish hue, diminutive in figure with irregular, vulgar, and often coarse features, fitted for a sedentary and mechanical life and wanting in that suppleness and activity which belong to the athlete and the runner. They have, moreover, left to it all the servilities of social life, every mark of the calling, condition and dress, every deformity which the mechanical occupation of the peasant and ceremonial restraint of the bourgeois impose on physical structure and on the expression of the face. Their work, however, is redeemed by other qualities: one that we have examined above, that is to say, the representation of the important characters, and the art of manifesting the essential of a race and of an epoch; the other, which we shall examine by-and-by, namely, harmony of color and skill

in composition. Apart from this, considered in themselves, ~~their personages~~ give pleasure to the eye; they are not over-excited and intellectually morbid, or suffering and stricken like the preceding class; they are in good condition and contented with life; they are comfortable in their homes and hovels; a pipe and a glass of beer are sufficient to make them happy; they are not agitated and not restless; they laugh heartily or look before them without wishing more. Bourgeois and gentlemen, they are happy to know that their clothes are new, that their floors are well waxed, and that their window-panes are clean. Domestics, peasants, shoemakers, and even mendicants, their cabins appear comfortable to them and they are contented seated on a stool; we see that they take pleasure in punching with their awls or in scraping their carrots. Their obtuse senses and their cold imagination do not carry them beyond; their entire countenance is calm or refreshed, simple or fatherly: such is the happiness of the phlegmatic temperament, and happiness, that is

to say moral and physical health, is beauty everywhere and even here.

We come now, at length, to grandiose figures in which the human animal attains to his full force and stature. Such are those of the Antwerp masters, Crayer, Gerard Seghers, Van Oost, Everdingen, Van Thulden, Abraham Janssens, Theodore Rombouts, Jordaens and Rubens in the first rank. Here we see bodies free of all social constraint, with which there is not and has not been any interference; they are either nude or carelessly draped; if they are clothed it is with fantastic and magnificent costumes which are for their members not an obstruction but a decoration. Nowhere have freer attitudes, more impetuous action, more vigorous and ampler muscles been found. Rubens' martyrs are furious giants and rampant wrestlers. The torsos and thighs of his female saints are those of fauns and bacchantes. The fuming wine of health and joyousness circulates impetuously in their overfed bodies; it overflows like superabundant sap in splendid carnations, in unre-

strained gestures, in colossal gayeties, in the superb fury of excitement; the ruddy stream of blood which comes and goes in their veins darts life through them with a jet so opulent and so free that every other human creature seems fettered and colorless. It is an ideal world, and when we perceive it there is given us, as it were, a great sweep of wing which bears us away above our own. But it is not] the highest of all. There the appetites are sovereign, there one scarcely goes beyond the vulgar life of the stomach and of the senses. There desire fires the eye with too fierce a flame; the sensual smile dwells too constantly on the lascivious lips; the gross body, voluptuously rounded, is not adapted to every diversity of virile activity; it is only capable of a bestial impulse and gluttonous satiety: the flesh, too sanguine and too soft, runs over into exaggerated and irregular forms; man is cut out on a grand scale but with rough strokes. He is narrow, violent, and often cynical and scurrilous: high qualities of

intellect are wanting in him, he is not noble. Hercules here is not a hero but an ox-killer. Having the muscularity of a bull he possesses the spirit of one; and man, such as Rubens conceived him, seems a flourishing brute whose instincts condemn him to the repletion of the pasture or to the fury of combat.

It remains for us to find a human type in which moral nobility completes physical perfection. For this purpose we will quit Flanders and betake ourselves to the land of the beautiful. We will traverse the Italian Low Countries, I mean Venice, and see in its painting an approach to the perfect type: amplitude of flesh, but confined to a form more refined; widespread joyousness, but of a finer nature; broad and undisguised voluptuousness, but exquisite and lustrous; vigorous heads and souls bound up with present life, but with intelligent countenances, reflective and dignified physiognomies, honest and aristocratic minds. We will then go to Florence and contemplate that school from which issued Leonardo da Vinci, into which

Raphael entered, and who, with Ghiberti, Donatello, Andrea del Sarto, Fra Bartolomeo and Michael Angelo, discovered the most perfect type to which modern art has attained. Contemplate the "St. Vincent" of Fra Bartolomeo, the "Madonna of the Sack" of Andrea del Sarto, Raphael's "School of Athens," the Medici Monument, and the arch of the Sistine Chapel by Michael Angelo; behold bodies as they ought to be; in the presence of this race of men, ~~others~~ are either weak, effeminate, gross or badly balanced. Not only have their figures the firm and vigorous health which invincibly resists the attacks of life; not only are they exempt from every blemish and from every constraint which the exigences of human society and the conflict with the surrounding world bring to us; not only do rhythm of structure and freedom of attitude manifest in them every faculty of activity and of movement; but again, their heads, their features, the totality of all their forms attest at one time, as in Michael Angelo, the energy and the sublimity of the will;

at another, as in Raphael, the immortal sweetness and repose of the soul; at another, as with Leonardo da Vinci, the elevation and exquisite refinement of the intelligence without, however, in either case, the extreme subtlety of moral expression being in contrast with the nudity of the body or with the perfection of limb, without the too great ascendancy of the thought or of the organs withdrawing the human being from that ideal heaven where all powers accord in greater harmony. Their personages may strive and wax wroth like the heroes of Michael Angelo, or meditate and smile like the women of Da Vinci, or live and be happy in living like the Madonnas of Raphael; the great point is not the momentary action in which they are engaged, but their entire structure. The head is only a portion of it; the breast, arms, joints and proportions, the entire form speaks and conspires to place before our eyes a creature of another species than our own; before them we are as monkeys or as the Papuans before ourselves. We cannot place them at any positive point of

history in order to find them a world; we are obliged to relegate them to the sequestered recesses of legend. The poesy of distance or the majesty of theogonies can alone furnish a soil worthy to nourish them. Before Raphael's Sibyls and Virtues, before Michael Angelo's Adams and Eves, we think of the heroic or serene figures of primitive humanity, of the virgin daughters of the earth and of the streams whose great eyes first reflected the azure of the paternal sky, of the naked combatants who descended from their mountain fastnesses to strangle lions in their arms. In withdrawing from such a spectacle we believe that our work is done, and that we cannot go beyond. And yet Florence is only the second patrimony of the beautiful; Athens is the first. A few heads and statues that have escaped the wreck of antiquity, the "Venus of Milo," the Parthenon marbles, the bust of Juno Queen, in the villa Ludovisi, will show you a still loftier and purer race, you will dare to recognize, by comparison, that in Raphael's figures sweetness is often somewhat

too placid, and that the square-set bodies are often a little too massive;* that in Michael Angelo's figures the soul-tragedy is too visibly announced by over-swollen muscles and an excess of effort. The true visible gods are born elsewhere and in a purer atmosphere.† A simpler and more spontaneous civilization, a better balanced and finer race, a better adapted religion, a better understood culture of the body formerly set apart a nobler type of a more tranquil bearing, of a more august serenity, of a more uniform and freer action, and of a more facile and more natural excellence; it has served as model to the Renaissance artists, and the art which we admire in Italy is but a shoot, less upright and less lofty, of the Ionian laurel transplanted to another soil.

* The Dresden "Madonna de San Sisto" and "La Belle Jardinière."

† The Venuses, Psyches, Graces, Jupiters and Cupids of the Farnesini palace.

V.

Such is the double scale according to which the characters of objects and the values of works of art are simultaneously classified. According as characters are more important or beneficent they hold a higher place and raise to a higher rank the works of art by which they are expressed. Note that importance and beneficence are two phases of a single quality, namely, *force*, considered in turn in relation to others and to itself. In the first case it is more or less important according as it resists greater or lesser forces. In the second case it is baneful or beneficent according as it borders on its own weakness or on its own extension. These two points of view are the most elevated from which nature can be considered, seeing that they turn our eye at one time toward its essence, at another toward its direction. In its essence it is a mass of brute forces un-

equal in magnitude, whose conflict is eternal, but whereof the whole sum and labor ever remain the same. In its direction it is a series of forms wherein the husbanded force has the prerogative of a continuous renovation, and even of an augmentation. At one time character is one of these primitive and mechanical forces constituting the essence of things; at another it is one of those ulterior forces capable of augmentation marking the direction of the world; and we comprehend why art is superior when, taking nature for its object, it manifests at one time some profound portion of its inner depths, and at another some leading epoch of its development.

§ 3.

THE CONVERGING DEGREE OF EFFECTS.

After having considered characters in themselves it remains for us to examine them when incorporated in a work of art. Not only is it necessary that in themselves they should have the greatest possible value but likewise is it necessary that in a work of art they should become as paramount as possible. It is in this way that they become more manifest and hold a more prominent place; in this way only will they become more apparent than in nature. To this end it is evidently necessary that all parts of a work should contribute to their manifestation. No element should remain passive or divert the attention in another direction; it would be a force wasted or a force employed in a counter sense. In other words, in a picture, in a statue, in a poem, in an edifice, and in a symphony all the effects should converge to one point. The degree of this convergence marks the place of the work, and you will see a third scale erected alongside of the two first to measure the value of works of art.

I.

Let us at first take the arts which disclose the moral man, and above all literature. We will begin by distinguishing the diverse elements which constitute a drama, an epic or a romance, in brief a work which places before us acting agents. In the first place there are agents in it, that is to say personages endowed, all of them, with a distinct character; and in a character we may recognize many parts. From the moment, says Homer, "an infant first falls on the knees of a woman," he possesses, at least in germ, faculties and instincts of a certain kind and to a certain degree; he is a compound of his father, of his mother, of his family and, in general, of his race; furthermore, inherited qualities, transmitted through the blood, take in him dimensions and proportions by which he is distinguished from his compatriots and from his relatives. This innate moral foundation is allied

to a physical temperament, and the whole together forms the primitive combination which education, example, training, all subsequent events and actions of infancy and of youth are to oppose or to complete. When these different forces, instead of neutralizing, re-enforce each other, this convergence of forces stamps itself deeply on man, and there appear strong and striking characters. This convergence is often wanting in nature ; it never fails in the work of great artists : it is thus that their characters, although composed of the same elements as real characters are more powerful than real characters. They prepare their personages minutely and remotely ; when they are presented to us we feel that they cannot be otherwise than they are. A vast framework supports them ; a profound logic has built them up. Nobody has possessed this gift to the same extent as Shakespeare. If you attentively read each of his parts you will find at every step, in a word, in a gesture, in an outburst of the imagination, in a desultory flow of ideas, in the turn of a phrase,

an echo and an index revealing to you the inward state, the entire past and the future of the personage before you.*

These are his *substrata*. Organic temperament, original or acquired aptitudes and tendencies, the complex growth of ideas and of remote or recent habits, all the sap of human nature infinitely transformed from its most primitive roots to its latest offshoots have contributed to produce the actions

* Othello, in his last moments, recurring to his travels and his infancy, a phenomenon frequent enough in suicides,

. of one whose hand,
Like the base Judean, threw a pearl away
Richer than all his tribe; of one whose subdued eyes,
Albeit unused to the melting mood,
Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees
Their medicinal gum

In Macbeth the sudden invasion at the first word of his homicidal and ambitious hallucination, a phenomenon frequent with monomaniacs:

My thought whose murder yet is but fantastical
Shakes so my single state of man, that function
Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is
But what is not.

and the expressions which form their terminal jet. This multitude of present forces and this concordance of concentrated effects were necessary in order to animate figures like Coriolanus, Macbeth, Hamlet, and Othello, and to form, nourish, and exalt the master-passion which is to nerve and to usher them forth. With Shakespeare may I name a modern, almost a contemporary, Balzac, the most gifted of all those who in our time have minted the treasures of our moral nature. No one has better shown the formation of man, the successive stages of his varied stratifications, the superposed and intersecting effects of relationship, of early impressions, of conversation, of studies, of friendships, of professions, of habitation, of the innumerable imprints which day after day come and stamp themselves on our soul in order to give to it its consistency and its form. He, however, is a novelist and a savant instead of being, like Shakespeare, a poet and dramatist; hence, instead of concealing his substrata he displays them; you will find them extensively enumerated

in his infinite descriptions and dissertations, in his circumstantial portraits of a house, of a face, or of a costume, in his preparatory accounts of an infancy or an education, and in his technical explanations of an invention or of a process. But his art, substantially, is the same, and when he builds up personages, such as Hulot, Père Grandet, Philippe Brideau, the old maid, a spy, a courtesan, a great business-man, his talent always consists in accumulating an enormous quantity of formative elements and moral influences into one channel and in one direction, like so many streams which swell and precipitate the same current.

A second group of elements in the literary work consists of situations and events. The character conceived, it is necessary that the conflict to which it is subjected should be suitable for its manifestation. In this respect, art, again, is superior to nature, for, in nature things do not always thus transpire. Some great and imposing character remains there buried and inert for lack either of opportunity or of temptation. If Crom-

well had not happened to be in the midst of the English Revolution he would probably have kept up the same life he led for forty years in his own family and district, that of a rural proprietor, town-magistrate, and rigid puritan solely concerned with his manures, his animals, his children, and his scruples of conscience. Postpone the French Revolution three years and Mirabeau would have been only a gentleman without social position, an adventurer, and man of pleasure. On the other hand, a mediocre or feeble character who was not equal to tragic events might have been equal to ordinary events. Suppose Louis XVI. to have been born in a middle-class family, and to have been an employé or a proprietor with a moderate fortune: he might have lived tranquilly and highly esteemed; he might have honestly fulfilled his daily task; we might have seen him attentive to his business, gentle with his wife, a good father to his children; in the evening by his fireside he might have taught them geography, and on Sunday, after the service, he would have amused them

with his locksmith's tools. The organized being whom nature subjects to the struggle for existence is like a ship which has just glided from the stocks into the water; it requires a strong wind or a light breeze according as it is either a frigate or a skiff; the gale which impels the frigate founders the skiff, and the light breeze which makes the skiff dance lets the frigate remain motionless in port. It is accordingly necessary that the artist should adapt his situations to his characters. You have here a second concordance and there is no necessity to show you that great artists never fail to establish it. What we call intrigue or action among them is simply a series of events and an order of situations arranged with a view to manifest characters, to probe natures to their depths, to bring up to the surface profound instincts and unknown faculties which the monotonous current of habit prevents from emerging into day, in order to measure, as in Corneille, the force of their will and the grandeur of their heroism, in order to expose, as in Shakespeare, the lusts, madness, and fury, the

strange devouring monsters which blindly rage and roar in the depths of our hearts. These experiences are varied relatively to the same personage; they can accordingly be so disposed as to always render them effective: this is the *crecendo* of all writers; they make use of it in each petty action as in the entire conception, and thus culminate in some supreme victory or in some supreme defeat. You perceive that the law is as applicable in the details as in the masses. Portions of a scene are grouped together in view of a certain effect; all effects are combined in view of a dénouement; the entire story is constructed in view of the natures which we wish to bring upon the stage. The noteworthy class and the visible character are due to the qualities which converge or persist in them; ~~this convergence~~ convergence of the entire character and of its successive situations manifests the essence of the character, and even its elements in drawing it out to a definite success or to a final overthrow.*

* See "La Fontaine et ses Fables," by H. Taine, 3d part, for the principle of convergences.

One last element remains, that of style. It is in fact, the sole apparent one ; the other two are simply its *substrata* ; it is a dress for them and it appears only on the surface. A book is merely a set of phrases which the author utters or makes his personages utter ; our exterior eyes and ears lay hold of nothing more, and whatever else is perceived by hearing and sight is conveyed to them only through the medium of these same phrases. Hence there is a third element of superior importance, the effect of which must accord with the effect of others in order that the total impression may be the greatest possible. But a phrase taken in itself is capable of diverse forms and, consequently, of diverse effects. It may be one verse followed by other verses ; it may comprise several verses of equal or of unequal length, of rhythms and rhymes diversely arranged, enabling you to appreciate the full wealth of metre. On the other hand, it may form one line of prose followed by other lines of prose ; and these lines are at one time linked together in a period, at another are cut up into

little isolated phrases, at another they are composed in turn of short periods and phrases, enabling you to perceive the full wealth of syntax.—Finally the words which compose the phrases have a character of their own; according to their origin and their ordinary use they are noble and generous, or dry and technical, or familiar and striking, or abstract and dull, or brilliant and picturesque. In short, a phrase uttered is a combination of forces which at once awaken in the reader the logical instinct, the musical aptitude, the acquisitions of memory, and the fires of the imagination, and thrills the whole man through the nerves, the senses, and the habits. It is necessary therefore that the style should be in keeping with the rest of the work; there is therein a final convergence, and on this domain the art of the great writers is without limit; their tact is of extraordinary delicacy and their invention is of inexhaustible fertility: we do not find in them a rhythm, a turn, a construction, a word, a sound or a combination of words, sounds, and phrases whose value

is not felt and whose use is not intentional. Here again art is superior to nature ; for through this choice, this transformation, and this use of style the imaginary personage speaks better and more conformably to his character than the real personage. Without here entering into the subtleties of art, and without going into the detail of processes, we easily perceive that verse is a sort of song and prose a sort of conversation that the stately alexandrine line raises the voice up to a sustained and noble accent, and that the short lyrical strophe is still more musical and still more exalted ; that the clear short phrase has the imperious or tripping tone ; that the long period has the oratorical inspiration and the majestic emphasis ; in short, that every form of style determines a state of the soul, either expansion or tension, transport or indifference, order or disorder, and that therefore the effects of situations and of characters are diminished or heightened according as the effects of style follow in the contrary sense or in the same sense. Suppose that Racine should adopt the style of

Shakespeare, and Shakespeare that of Racine, their work would be absurd or rather they would not be able to write ; the seventeenth century phrase, so clear, so well-proportioned, so purified, so well put together, so well adapted to a palace discourse is incapable of expressing the crude passions, and imaginative sallies, the inward and irresistible tempest which vents itself in the English drama. On the other hand, the sixteenth century phrase, at one time familiar and at another lyrical, venturesome, harsh and disjointed would be a blemish if put in the mouths of the polished, well-educated, and accomplished personages of French tragedy. Instead of a Racine and a Shakespeare you would have Drydens and Otways and a Ducis and Casimir Delavigne. Such is the power and such the conditions of style. The characters which situations unfold to the mind are manifested to the senses only through language, and the convergence of the three forces gives to the character all its prominence. The more the artist has discriminated and made converge in his work

numerous elements and capable of effect, the more the character which he wishes to place in light becomes prominent. The whole of art lies in two words, concentration in manifestation.



II.

According to this principle we may class once more various literary works. All things equal in other respects, they will be more or less beautiful according to the greater or less completeness of the convergence of effects in them ; and, through a singular coincidence, this rule applied to the schools, establishes, between the successive stages of the same art, the divisions which history and experience have already introduced into them.

At the commencement of every literary age we remark a period of gestation ; art is weak and infantile ; it is because the convergence of effects is insufficient there, and the fault is due

to the ignorance of the writer. He is not wanting in inspiration ; he has it and often in a natural and vigorous way ; talent abounds at this moment ; noble forms flit obscurely through the depths of the soul ; but processes are not known ; people do not know how to write, how to distribute the parts of a subject, how to employ literary resources. Such is the defect of early French literature in the middle-ages. In reading the "Chanson de Roland," "Renaud de Montauban," "Ogier le Danois," you quickly perceive that the men of this age entertained grand and original sentiments ; a new society had been organized ; the crusades were in progress ; the proud independence of the baron, the indomitable fidelity of the vassal, military and heroic habits, strength of body and simplicity of heart provided poesy with characters equal to those of Homer. It only half profited by them ; it has felt their beauty without being able to render it. The *trouvère* was laic and French, that is to say, born of a race ever prosaic and at that day so situated as to be deprived of

superior culture by clerical monopoly. He narrates in a dry and coarse manner; he has not the broad and brilliant imagery of Homer and of antique Greece; his story is tame; his monorhythmic stanza repeats thirty times in succession the same monotonous stroke of the bell. He is not master of his subject; he does not know how to curtail, develop and proportion, to prepare a scene and strengthen an effect. His work takes no place in the literature of all time; it disappears from the world, and only engages the attention of antiquaries. If it is successful it is through isolated works, through a "Niebelungen" in Germany, where the old national foundation has not been upturned by the ecclesiastical establishment; through the "Divine Comedy" in Italy, where Dante, by a supreme effort of labor, enthusiasm and genius finds, in a mystic and learned poem, the unlooked-for union of lay sentiments and theological theories.

When art revives in the sixteenth century other examples show us the same want of convergence, resulting, at first, in the same insufficiency. Mar-

low, the early English dramatist, is a man of genius ; he felt, like Shakespeare, the fury of violent passions, the sombre grandeur of northern melancholy, the tragic poesy of contemporary history ; but he did not know how to manage dialogue, vary circumstances, graduate situations and contrast characters ; his process is only continuous murder and speechless death ; his drama is powerful, but rusted out, and only known to the curious. In order that his tragic conception of life may bloom out before all eyes and in full daylight, it is necessary that a greater genius after him, furnished with accumulated experience, should brood a second time over the same spirits ; it is necessary that Shakespeare, after having himself groped his way more than once, should imbue the crude sketches of his precursor with the varied, full and profound life for which primitive art had proved inadequate.

On the other hand, at the end of every literary era we remark a period of decadence ; art here becomes corrupt, worn out, and stiffened through

routine and conventionalism. Here also the convergence of effects is wanting, but the fault is not due to ignorance. On the contrary, people have never been so cultivated; all methods have been perfected and refined; they have even become common property; whoever desires to make use of them can avail himself of them. The language of poetry is complete; the feeblest writer knows how a phrase is constructed, how rhymes are coupled together, and how to bring about a catastrophe. It is feeble sentiment which lowers art. The great conception which formed and sustained the works of the masters, droops and perishes; it is preserved only through reminiscences and tradition. It is no longer pursued to the end; changes are effected in it by introducing into it another spirit; it is supposed to be perfected by incongruities. Such was the situation of the Grecian drama in the time of Euripides, and of the French drama in the time of Voltaire. The outward form remained the same as before; but the spirit that animated it was transformed, and the contrast is

disagreeable. Euripides retains the accessories, the choruses, the metre and the heroic and divine personages of Æschylus and of Sophocles. But he degrades them down to the level of the sentiments and the plottings of ordinary life; he makes them discourse like lawyers and sophists; he delights in exposing their misfortunes, weaknesses and lamentations. Voltaire accepts or takes upon himself the proprieties and the mechanism of Racine and of Corneille, the confidants, high-priests, princes and princesses, chivalric and graceful love-making, alexandrine stanzas—a recognized and noble style—dreams, oracles and divinities. But he adds an exciting intrigue borrowed from the English stage; he attempts, moreover, to give it historic varnish; he forces into it philosophical and humanitarian intentions; he insinuates attacks against kings and priests; he is the innovator and the thinker out of season and out of place. With both of them the various elements of the work no longer concur to the same result. Antique drapery is foreign to modern sentiments · modern

sentiments do violence to antique drapery. The personages are nonplused between two rôles ; those of Voltaire are princes, enlightened by the "Encyclopedia ;" those of Euripides are heroes, polished in the schools of the rhetorician. Under this double mask their figure flickers ; we no longer see it ; or rather, they do not live except by fits and starts, and at rare intervals. Here the reader abandons this world, which is self-destructive, and seeks works in which, according to the model of living creatures, all the parts are organs which conspire to the same result.

We find them at the central point of literary ages, at the moment when art is in flower ; previously it is in germ, a little later it becomes faded. At this moment the convergence of effects is complete, and an admirable harmony equalizes amongst them characters, style and action. This moment is encountered in Greece in the times of Sophocles and, if I am not mistaken, still better in the time of Æschylus when tragedy, true to its origins, is yet a dithyrambic chant, when the religious senti-

ment of the initiated is thoroughly infused into it, when the gigantic forms of heroic or divine legend possess their full stature, when fatality, arbiter of human life, and justice, custodian of social life, spin and cut the threads of destiny, to the sounds of a poesy obscure like an oracle, terrible as a prophecy, and sublime as a vision. You may see in Racine the perfect concordance of oratorical skill, of pure and noble diction, of learned composition, of well-planned dénouement, of dramatic decorum, of princely politeness, and of the delicacies and proprieties of the court and the drawing-room. You will find a like concordance in the complex and composite work of Shakespeare if you observe that, depicting man intact and complete, he has had to employ the most poetic verses side by side with the most familiar prose, every contrast of style in order to manifest in turn the heights and the depths of human nature, the exquisite delicacy of female characters and the uncontrollable violence of men's characters, the crude coarseness of pop-

ular manners, and the over-refined polish of worldly ceremonial, the gossip of current conversation and the enthusiasm of extreme emotion, the surprises of petty vulgar occurrences and the fatality of unrestrained passions. However different the methods may be they always, with great writers, converge; they converge in the fables of La Fontaine as in the funeral orations of Bossuet, in Voltaire's tales as in the stanzas of Dante, in Byron's Don Juan as in Plato's Dialogues, among the ancients as among the moderns, among the romanticists as among the classicists. The example of the masters imposes no fixed form, style or arrangement on their successors. If one succeeds in one way, another succeeds in an opposite way; one point only is essential, which is that his whole work should move forward on the same line; it is necessary that it should direct all its forces toward a given end. Art, like nature, casts its objects in every mould; only, in order that the object be viable it is necessary, in art as in nature, that the parts should con-

stitute a whole, and that the least part of the least element should be subordinate to the whole.

III.

It remains to us to consider the arts which manifest the physical man, and to recognize their various elements, especially those of painting, the richest of all. What we observe at first in a picture are the living bodies with which it is filled; and in these bodies we have already distinguished two principal parts: the general framework of bone and muscle, that is to say the naked muscles; and the external covering which protects them, that is to say, the impressionable and colored skin. You see at once that these two elements must be in harmony. The white and feminine skin of Correggio is not found on the heroic muscularities of Michael Angelo.—And so is it in respect to a third element, attitude and physiognomy; certain smiles comport only with certain bodies;

never does an over-fed wrestler, an ostentatious Susannah, a fleshy Magdalen of Rubens display the pensive, delicate and profound expression which Da Vinci imparts to his countenances. These are only the grosser and more outward concordances; there are others much more profound and not less necessary.

All the muscle, bone, and articulations, all parts of the physical man have a significative virtue; each of them may express various characters. The great toe and the clavicle of a doctor are not those of a combatant; the least part of the body contributes through its amplitude, its form, its color, its dimensions, its consistency, to rank the human animal amongst one or the other species. There is here a large number of elements whose effects must converge; if the artist is ignorant of any of them he lessens his power; if he causes one to be contradictory he partially destroys the effect of the other. Hence it is that the Renaissance masters have so deeply studied the human body; hence it is that Michael Angelo passed

twelve years in dissecting. This was no pedantry, no minutia of literal observation. The exterior parts of the human body are the treasury of sculptor and painter as the interior parts of the human soul are the treasury of the novelist and the dramatist. The projection of a tendon is as important for one as is the prevalence of a habit for the other. Not only is it necessary that he should take it into account in order to make a viable body, but again he may take advantage of it in order to make a body energetic or attractive. The more his mind has become impressed *Exaggeration* with its form, diversities, dependencies and *Character* usage, the more masterly is his eloquent use of it in his work; and, if you closely study the figures of the great century, you will perceive that from the heel to the head, from the curve of the arched foot to the lines on the face there is no dimension, no form, no tone of flesh which does not contribute toward bringing out into relief the character which the artist desired to express.

Here do new elements present themselves, or rather the same elements are presented from another point of view. The lines which trace the bodily contour, or which, in this contour, mark depressions and projections, have a value in themselves; and, according as they are straight, curved, sinuous, broken or irregular, they produce upon us different effects. The same thing occurs with the masses composing the body; their proportions have also in themselves a significative power; according to the various relationships of size which unite the head to the trunk, the trunk to the members, the members to each other, we experience various impressions. There is an architecture of the body, and to the organic connections which tie together its living parts we must join the mathematical connections which determine the geometrical masses and its abstract contour. In this respect we may compare it to a column; a certain proportion of diameter and of height makes it Ionic or Doric, elegant or truncated. In a similar man-

ner a certain proportion between the size of the head and the size of the whole form makes the body Florentine or Roman. The shaft of the column cannot be greater than its thickness multiplied a certain number of times by itself; in a similar manner the whole form of the body must attain to and not surpass a certain multiple of which the head is the unit.

All parts of the body have thus their mathematical measurement; without being rigorously limited to this they approximate to it, and the different degrees of this approximation express a different character. The artist accordingly here comes in possession of a new resource; he can select small heads and elongated bodies like Michael Angelo, simple and monumental lines like Fra Bartolomeo, undulating contours and varied inflexions like Correggio. Balanced or disordered groups, upright or oblique attitudes, different planes and different compartments in his picture will furnish him with different symmetries. A fresco or a picture is a square, a rectangle, a circle, an archway, in

brief, a panel of space in which the human assemblage forms an edifice. Consider in the engravings of the "Martyrdom of St. Sebastian" by Baccio Bandinelli, or the "School of Athens" by Raphael, and you will appreciate this order of beauty which the Greeks by a word full of music called eurythmy. Look at the same subject treated by two painters, the "Antiope" by Titian and by Correggio, and you will appreciate the different effects of the geometry of lines. It is a new force which it is necessary to turn in the same sense as the others and which, neglected or badly directed, prevents character from having its full expression.

I come now to the last element which is a capital one, that of color. By themselves, and outside of their imitative purposes, colors, like lines, have a sense of their own. A gamut of colors which portray no real object may, like an arabesque of lines imitating no natural object, be either rich or meager, elegant or dull. The impression they make on us varies according to

their combination; their combination therefore ~~has~~ has an expression. A picture is a colored surface in which the different tones and the different degrees of light are distributed with a certain selection; here you see its inward life; it is for them an ulterior property; it does not prevent their primitive property from having all its importance and all its rights, that these tones and these degrees of light should be shaped into figures, draperies and architectural designs. The special value of color is therefore enormous, and the direction which painters take in this respect determines the rest of their work. But in this element there are many other elements; at first, the general degree of luminousness or of obscurity; Guido paints white, silver-gray, slaty-gray and pale blue, and all in full light. Caravaggio paints black and an intense, earthy, charred brown, and all in opaque shadow. Again, the opposition of lights and darks in the same picture is more or less powerful, and more or less proportioned. You are familiar with the delicate gradation which, in Da Vinci, causes the form to

emerge insensibly out of the shadow ; with the exquisite gradation which, in Correggio, brings the strongest light out of the universal light ; with the violent emergence in Ribera of a clear tone suddenly bursting forth out of the lugubrious blackness ; with the humid and yellow atmosphere through which Rembrandt darts a ray of sunshine, or infiltrates it with some wandering gleam.—Finally, besides their degree of luminousness, tones, according as they are or are not complementary to each other,* have their discords and their harmonies ; they are mutually attracted or repelled ; orange, violet, red, green, and all others, simple or commingled, thus form through their proximity, like musical notes through their succession, a full and strong, or rugged and rude, or soft and sweet harmony. Contemplate in the “Esther” of Veronese in the Louvre the charming succession of yellows which, vaguely pale, darkened, silvered, reddened, tinged with green and amethyst, and

* Chevreuil, “Treatise on the Contrasts of Colors.”

always tempered and allied together, melt into each other from the pale jonquil to the dead leaf and the burning topaz; or in the "Holy Family" of Giorgione, the powerful reds which from the almost black purple of the drapery go on diversifying and illuminating each other, spotted with ochre on the solid flesh, palpitating and trembling in the interstices of the fingers, spreading out bronzed upon a manly breast, and, impregnated by turns with light and shadow, falling at last upon the face of a young girl in an emanation of sunset glow. In these you will comprehend the expressive power of such an element. It is to figures what the accompaniment is to vocal music; and better still, for it is sometimes the song to which the figures are simply the accompaniment; from an accessory it gets to be a principal. But let its value be accessory, principal or simply equal to that of the others, it is no less evident that it is a distinct force, and that in order to express character its effect must harmonize with the other effects.

IV.



According to this principle we will make a final classification of the works of painters. All things equal in other respects, we see that they will be more or less beautiful according as the convergence of effects in them is more or less complete; and this rule, applied to literary history, marking the successive periods of a literary age, gives us the means, if we know how to apply them to the history of painting, of defining the successive states of a school of art.

In the primitive period the work is still imperfect. Art is inadequate, and the ignorant artist knows not how to make all the effects converge. He handles some of them, often very well and with genius; but he has no suspicion of the others; a lack of experience prevents him from seeing them, or the atmosphere of civilization in which he lives diverts his eyes from them. Such is the state of art during the two

first ages of Italian painting. In spirit and in genius Giotto resembles Raphael; he had the same fertility, the same facility, the same originality, the same beauty of invention,—his sentiment of harmony and nobleness was not less; but the language was not formed and he only stammered while the other spoke. He had not studied under Perugino and in Florence, he was not familiar with antique statues. At that time the first glance only had been bestowed on the living body; ignorant of the muscles, people did not see their expressive force; they would not have dared to comprehend and love the fine human animal; it smacked too much of paganism; the sway of theology and of mysticism was too powerful. Hieratic and symbolic painting thus continues a century and a half without making use of its principal element.—The second age commences, and the goldsmith-anatomists, becoming painters, model for the first time in their pictures and in their frescoes solid bodies and well-jointed members. But they are still deficient in other parts of their art. They are

unconscious of that architecture of lines and masses which, seeking for ideal curves and proportions, transforms the real body into a beautiful body; Verocchio, Pollaiuolo, Castagno, produce angular and ungraceful figures, all knotted with muscles, and which, according to a saying of Leonardo da Vinci, "resemble bags of nuts." They are unconscious of variety of action and physiognomy, and, in Perugino, Fra Filippo and Ghirlandajo, and in the ancient frescoes of the Sistine Chapel, the figures, passive, cold or ranged in monotonous files, seem to await their existence in the final inspiration which never comes. They are blind to the richness or delicacy of color, the personages of Signorelli, Credi and Botticelli being dull, dry and detached in sharp relief against a background without an atmosphere. It is necessary that Antonello da Messina should introduce into Italy painting in oil in order that the glow and combination of melting, lustrous tones should make warm blood flow in their veins. It is necessary that Leonardo da Vinci should discover the insensible

gradations of light in order that aerial perspective should cause the retreating fulness of their forms to emerge, and envelop their contours in the mild transparency of chiaroscuro. It is only at the end of the fifteenth century that all the elements of art, liberated one by one, can unite their forces in the hand of a master in order to manifest through their concord the character which he conceived.

On the other hand when, in the second half of the fifteenth century, painting declines the temporary convergence which had produced masterpieces becomes relaxed and can no longer be re-established. But recently it did not exist because the artist was not sufficiently learned; now it fails because he is too pedantic. In vain do the Caracci study with indefatigable patience and draw from all schools the most varied and most fecund processes. It is just this combination of discordant effects which reduces their work to an inferior position. Their sentiment is too weak to produce harmony; they take from one and then from another and are ruined in

borrowing. Their knowledge injures them in reuniting in the same effects that which cannot be united. The "Cephalus" of Annibal Caracci, in the Farnese palace, has the muscles of one of Michael Angelo's wrestlers, a stoutness and redundancy of flesh borrowed from the Venetians, a smile and cheeks taken from Correggio—reminding us disagreeably of a graceful and fat athlete. The "St. Sebastian" of Guido in the Louvre is the torso of an antique Antinoüs, bathed in a light which, in its glow, reminds one of that of Correggio, and in its bluish tone of that of Prudhon—disagreeably suggesting a sentimental and amiable ephebos of the palestrum. Everywhere, throughout this decadence, the expression of the head contradicts that of the body; you see the airs of saints, devotees, worldly women, sigisbees, grisettes, youthful pages, and domestics on vigorous forms and bodies full of muscular commotion; the whole together combines gods and saints, who are insipid declaimers; nymphs and Madonnas who are drawing-room goddesses, and, oftener still, certain personages

who, floating between two characters, fulfil the requirements of neither and are nothing. Similar disparities for a long time arrested Flemish painting in the midst of its career, when with Michael Coxcie, Martin Hemskirk, Francis Floris, Henry Goltzius, and John Rottenhamer, it was desirous of becoming Italian. In order that Flemish art should resume its enthusiasm and attain its end it was necessary that a new afflux of national inspiration should overshadow foreign importations and give a new impulse to the instincts of the race. Then, with Rubens and his contemporaries, the original idea of the *ensemble* reappeared; the elements of art which were grouped only to be in contradiction were linked together in order to become complete, and viable works replaced abortions.

Between periods of decline and infantile periods is placed ordinarily a period of efflorescence. But whether we meet it, as it generally happens, at the centre of the whole period, or in the slight interval which separates ignorance from false taste; or whether we find it, as

it sometimes happens, when it concerns one man or an isolated work, in an eccentric position, always is the masterpiece due to a universal convergence of effects. In support of this truth the history of Italian painting furnishes us with the most varied and most decisive examples. It is in pursuit of this unity that all the art of the masters is applied, and the delicacy of perception which constitutes their genius is wholly revealed by the opposition of their processes as well as by the coherence of their conception. You have remarked in Da Vinci a supreme and almost feminine elegance of visage, an indefinable smile, a profound expression of feature, the melancholy superiority or exquisite refinement of the soul, and rare or original attitudes in unison with waving suppleness of contour, with the mysterious charm of chiaroscuro, with vague depths of increasing shadow, with insensible gradations of form, with the strange beauty of vaporous perspectives. You have remarked with the Venetians an ample and rich light, a joyous and healthy consonance of related or antagonistic

tones, a sensual lustre of color in unison with splendor of decoration, with the freedom and magnificence of life, with the bold energy or with the patrician nobleness of head, with the voluptuous charm of ample and living flesh, with the easy and animated action of groups, with the universal expansion of happiness. In a fresco by Raphael sobriety of color suits the sculptural force and solidity of the figures, the calm architecture of the grouping and composition, the seriousness and simplicity of the heads, the temperate action of the attitudes and the serenity and moral elevation of the expression. A picture by Correggio is a sort of Alcinoüs' enchanted garden where the bewildering seduction of light wedded to light, the capricious and caressing grace of waving or broken lines, the glittering whiteness and soft rotundity of feminine forms, piquant irregularity of faces, the vivacity, the tenderness, the abandonment of expression and of action combine to form an exquisite and delicate dream of felicity, such as a fairy's magic and a woman's affection would prepare for her

lover. The entire work springs from one principal root; a primitive and predominant sensation pushes on and ramifies to infinity the complex growth of effects; with Fra Angelico it is the vision of supernatural illumination and a mystic conception of celestial bliss; with Rembrandt it is the idea of an expiring light in a humid atmosphere and the mournful sentiment of poignant reality. You will find an idea of the same order determining and harmonizing lines of different species, the selection of types, the arrangement of groups, the expressions, the motions, the color in Rubens and in Ruysdael, in Poussin and Lesueur, in Prudhon and in Delacroix. Criticism labors in vain, it cannot define all the results that flow from it; they are innumerable and too profound; life is the same in works of genius and in those of nature; it penetrates down to the infinitely small; no analysis can reach the end of it. But in these as well as in those observation verifies the essential concordances, the reciprocal dependencies, the final direction and the harmonies of the ensemble but

whose entire detail it does not succeed in distinguishing.

V.

We can now, gentlemen, take in the whole of art in a single glance, and comprehend the principle which assigns to each work its rank on the scale. We have established, according to our preceding studies, that a work of art is a system of parts, at one time drawn from every detail as it happens in architecture and in music, at another reproduced according to some real object as it happens in literature, sculpture and painting; and we are reminded that the purpose of art is to manifest by this *ensemble* some notable character. We have hence concluded that the merit of the work is greater proportionately as this character becomes more notable and more predominant. We have distinguished in the notable character two points of view, according as it is more important, that is to say more stable and more elementary; and according as it is

Preceding studies

~~more beneficent~~, that is say, more capable of contributing to the preservation and to the development of the individual and of the group in which he is comprehended. We have seen that to these two points of view, according to which we may estimate the value of characters, correspond two scales by which we may value works of art. We have remarked that these two points of view are combined in a single one, and that, in short, the important or beneficent character is never but one force, measured at one time by its effects on others and, at another, by its effects on itself; whence it follows that character having two kinds of power has two kinds of value. We have then sought how, in a work of art, it can be more clearly manifested than in nature; and we have seen that it takes a more powerful relief when the artist, employing all the elements of his work, makes all their effects converge. Thus is established before us a third scale; and we have seen that works of art are so much more beautiful, as character is imprinted and expressed

in them with a more universally predominant ascendancy. The masterpiece is that in which the greatest force receives the greatest development. In the language of the painter, the superior work is that in which the character possessing the greatest possible value in nature receives from art all the increase in value that is possible. Let me express the same matter to you in a less technical manner. The Greeks, our masters, teach us here the theory of art as well as everything else. Note the successive transformations which have been gradually erected in their temples, a *Jupiter mansuetus*, a *Venus of Milo*, a *Diana, huntress*, a *Juno* like that of the Villa Ludovisi, the *Fates* of the Parthenon, and all those perfect images whose mutilated fragments still suffice to show us the exaggerations and the inadequacies of our own art. The three steps of their conception are precisely the three steps which have led us to our doctrine. At the commencement their divinities are only the elementary and profound forces of the universe: the maternal

Earth, subterranean Titans, rustling streams, the rain-giving Jupiter, the Hercules sun. A little later these same gods liberate their humanity buried in the brute energies of nature, and the martial Pallas, the chaste Artemis, the liberator Apollo, the Hercules vanquisher of monsters, all the beneficent powers form the noble choir of complete figures which Homer's poems are to place on thrones of gold. Ages pass away before they descend to the earth; it is necessary that lines and proportions, a long time manipulated, should reveal their resources and be able to maintain the burden of the divine idea which they are to bear. Finally, man's fingers imprint on bronze and on marble the immortal form; the primitive conception, at first elaborated in the mysteries of the temples, then transformed by the visions of the bard, attains its completion under the hand of the sculptor.

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